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CONTRIBUTIONS TO INDIAN SOCIOLOGY

EDITED BY

LOUIS DUMONT
PARIS

AND

D. POCOCK
OXFORD

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

For a Sociology of India 7
Village Studies 23
Kinship 43

FOR A SOCIOLOGY OF INDIA[1]

In our opinion, the first condition for a sound development of a Sociology of India is found in the establishment of the proper relation between it and classical Indology. We wish to show how on one side the construction of an Indian Sociology rests in part upon the existence of Indology and how, on the other hand, far from its results being confined to its own domain, it can hope in its turn to widen and deepen the understanding of India, present and past, to which Indology is devoted.

It should be obvious, in principle, that a Sociology of India lies at the point of confluence of Sociology and Indology. In claiming this, we can refer to a small band of scholars who have combined both effectively. First comes Marcel Mauss, a sociologist and ethnologist who was primarily, at the outset, an historian of religions and a sanskritist, and whose *Essay on Sacrifice*[2] contains a sociological analysis of sacrifice in the Brahmanas. Even though in later life his duties involved more and more attention to general ethnology and sociology, India was always present in Mauss's thought, as those who attended his lectures on Polynesia and Melanesia well know. To the same group of French sociologists belonged Bouglé, whose brief and neglected essay, *Le Régime des Castes*,[3] although published as early as 1900, is still to our mind the most important work which has appeared on the matter. The sociological spirit is much in evidence in Prof. Mus's monumental *Borobudur* and, still more important, in the work of Prof.

[1] This is a summary and adaptation of a text prepared for different circumstances. (Inaugural address, Chair of Sociology of India in the "Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes" (6th Section), Paris, 8.11.1955). We give it here as providing a general perspective and starting point which we hope some of our colleagues may choose to consider.

[2] Henri Hubert et Marcel Mauss, "Essai sur la nature et la fonction du sacrifice," *Année Sociologique* (Paris, t. II 1897–8). p, 29–138. Reprinted in *Mélanges d'Histoire des Religions* (Paris, 1909).

[3] *Année Sociologique*, t. IV (1900), p. 1–64, reprinted in: Célestin Bouglé, *Essais sur le régime des Castes* (Paris, 1908) (*Travaux de l'Année Sociologique*).

Dumézil, where it has brilliantly resuscitated the Indo-European comparison. Dumézil's work on an epoch in the distant past is so far from being useless in helping us to understand the present that in fact his analysis of *varṇa* completes and corrects Hocart's views. In even a summary list of our immediate masters Hocart also has his place. While the scholars just referred to only indirectly applied sociological views to the study of modern or ancient evidence, Hocart's work on caste[4] was for a large part based on direct observation. It was translated and published in French with the encouragement of Mauss, who also wrote a preface for it, years before it appeared in its original form in English. We may have to reject some of Hocart's conclusions, but even in doing so we should be guided by his deeper insight.

Up to about 1950, on the other hand, most professional ethnologists at work in India concerned themselves with tribes, i.e. with groups which they believed had escaped, as a result of their isolation, the influence of Indian civilisation, just as if they were situated in Africa or Melanesia. The great mass of the Indian population did not interest them but only these primitive 'reserves' which it was hoped would throw valuable light upon the history of the settlement and culture of the sub-continent. From our present point of view, we can say that, in that period, no relation was established between ethnology and indology (rather, the relation was one of assumed heterogeneity, see p. 15–16). Still we may point out that as early as 1908 Mauss warned against this when he showed Rivers that the Todas of the Nilgiris were much more Hinduised than that author had perceived.[5] The failure to recognize that most so-called "primitives" in India are only people who have lost contact has been one of the reasons which retarded Indian ethnology and sociology as a whole, despite a few brilliant exceptions.

The first in point of time to take a new orientation was Prof. M. N. Srinivas. Others before him had indeed written monographs on castes, such as Dr. A. Aiyappan, a student of Malinowski and Firth, who described two castes of Malabar.[6] But Srinivas was the first, under the influence of Radcliffe-Brown, to ponder at sufficient length the field data he had collected in order to attempt a sociological analysis of the religion of the Coorgs. His field-work, which was done in 1940–42, was not published until 1952.[7] Since then a number of anthropologists,

[4] A. M. Hocart, *Les Castes* (Paris, 1938) (*Annales du Musée Guimet, Bibl. de vulgarisation*, t. 54); *Caste, a Comparative Study* (London, 1950).

[5] M. Mauss, review of: W. H. R. Rivers, *The Todas*, in *Année Sociologique*, t. XI (1906–1909), p. 154–158.

[6] A. Aiyappan, *Social and Physical Anthropology of the Nayadis of Malabar* (Madras, 1937) (*Bull. of the Madras Govt. Museum*, N.S. Gen. Section, II, 4); *Iravas and Culture Change* (Madras, 1944) (*Bull. of the Madras Govt. Museum*, N.S. Gen. Section, V, 1).

[7] M. N. Srinivas, *Religion and Society among the Coorgs of South India* (Oxford, 1952).

American, Indian and others, have worked among India's rural and even urban population. So far the results of this work have been only partially published, but from what we have seen of them it is obvious that the points of view are extremely diverse and certainly the thesis which we are offering here is not generally admitted. Still, the necessity for the sociologist to be acquainted not merely with the living language but also with Indian literature and with classical Indology in general appears to be imposing itself by experience. Short term practical considerations and a rather naive estimation of the methods of sociology and anthropology explain perhaps why this has not been recognized straitforwardly from the outset. In order to justify the divorce some might argue from the difference between a study of the actual – synchronic – and a discipline (classical Indology) which works in a historical – diachronic – perspective. But surely this is to confuse the level of analysis with that of information.

To justify the "rapprochement", there is first of all the fact that the basic inspiration of all this effort – philogical, archaeological, historical, as well as anthropological –, applied to India as to other civilisations, is one and the same, namely, the endeavour to constitute an adequate idea of mankind.

By putting ourselves in the school of Indology, we learn in the first place never to forget that India is *one*. The very existence, and influence, of the traditional higher, sanskritic, civilisation demonstrates without question the unity of India. One might even think that it does not only demonstrate, but actually constitutes it. But this last statement is too narrow, at any rate for the sociologist, because, as we shall see, the lower, or popular level of civilisation has not only to be recognized, but to be taken as being in some way homogeneous with the higher one.

Indeed, the unity of India is a sort of common-place, and the existence of castes from one end of the country to the other, and nowhere else, should impose the idea. But nevertheless it is true that a number of our colleagues do not appear to be sure of this, or at least do not seem to draw the full consequences of the fact. Certainly there are extenuating circumstances, e.g. that the unity of India was used as a political weapon in the achievement of independence, or that it is difficult to define, or that it is as well to reserve judgement on the common sense data. Still it is essential that this unity be postulated from the outset. We shall see that although this may complicate our methods it simplifies our principles and objectives. Our postulate does not prevent us from recognizing local, regional and social diversities whenever we may meet them and indeed it is by a consideration of such diversities that we verify our original position. If, for the sake of apparent simplicity, we refuse this initial postulate, we shall be led in fact inextricably into difficulty, and there will be no sociology of India except in a vague geographic sense.

The nature of Indian unity immediately confronts us with a problem

of method. It is not merely a cultural unity such as is known in other parts of the world, as let us say among a number of neighbouring African tribes (and the same sort of difference would arise if we were to consider Europe instead of India). As has been remarked, unity is found here above all in ideas and values, it is therefore deeper and less easily defined: on the one hand it is social in the strictest sense, and this justifies our sociological perspective, it makes *Indian society as a whole* the true object of our study. On the other hand, this unity consists more in relations than in isolated elements. This is another way of saying the same thing, but which enables us to throw into relief the largely illusory character of Indian diversity, too obvious, as M. Nehru said, to be true.[8] The moment we get from haphazard notes to exhaustive, intensive study, and from isolated features to sets of relations between features, the empirical diversity recedes in the background, and an almost monotonous similarity springs forth.

But here then comes the problem. We conceive of our descriptive sociology as based on monographic fieldwork accomplished by a trained anthropologist. This supposes that the empirical group which one individual can live in is a legitimate object of study. This is not so here. Here, for any wary observer, to attempt to isolate an empirical group, i.e. a segment of a caste (which is for the purpose the same as a caste) – not to speak of a village – from its milieu is to offend against the primary principle of sociology which forbids us to abstract a phenomenon from its social context. For, as we have said, in India the relation between an empirical group and its environment is social in the strictest sense. How shall we then limit our research in a practical way? To speak of "Regional Studies" is to be vague. It is in fact impossible to abide by the confines of a state or a language. Once one leaves the empirical group one is led step by step and inevitably to consider the whole sub-continent. No material extension will do, a change in the approach is needed. Of course this is theoretical, but it is true at any rate that the monographic method will have to be adapted to Indian conditions.

Perhaps this difficulty is at the same time a boon, being the condition of a direct contribution of Indian studies to general (descriptive) sociology. In the foregoing we have opposed superficially society and culture, in order to emphasize the difference in the relation between the empirical group and its environment in small and in large societies. Following

[8] "The diversity of India is tremendous, it is obvious", but the same author wrote, only two pages earlier: "The unity of India was no longer merely an intellectual conception for me: it was an emotional experience which overpowered me" (Jahawarlal Nehru, *Discovery of India*, New York, 1946, p. 47, 49). Just as we Europeans are struck in Europe more by regional or national diversities than by the common civilisation, so Indian anthropologists, from their very situation, are tempted to stress differences within India rather than pan-Indian patterns.

Mauss,[9] we took "cultural phenomena" to mean phenomena common to several societies in contact. For the sociologist, these are also of course social phenomena. Only, while social phenomena in the strict sense are *internal* to one society, the social phenomena called here "cultural" are taken as *external* (to one society). Internal phenomena may be called social phenomena of the first order, and external, or cultural phenomena may be called social phenomena of the second order. A somewhat narrow exegesis by Radcliffe-Brown of Durkheimian sociology may be responsible for an exclusive emphasis on the first order which, even in Africa, puts some obstacles in the way of comparison. If it is not unreasonable to suggest that two societies cannot properly be compared without reference to the cultures to which they respectively belong, that is if the progress of the discipline demands that the empirical group be somehow transcended, then the basic complication of our Indian method is likely to prove of some general interest.

To return to what we called "descriptive sociology", we should add that to say description is to say understanding. This is true in three ways: 1) because there are no sociological *facts* unless and until we speak of them, i.e. we express the data in sociological language; 2) we do not claim to "explain" isolated traits, but tend, as Lévi-Strauss has pointed out, to account for each of them by the system of which it is a part; 3) because our primary object is a system of ideas. It is a matter then, broadly speaking, of a sociology of values: first we must describe the common values and take care not to mix up facts of "representation" with facts of behaviour as one does for instance if one enumerates side by side the "ritual values" which the system of castes expresses and the so-called "secular values" which it neglects.[10] The task may here appear delicate: following Hocart's advice we must learn from the people themselves which modes of thinking we have the right to apply and which we should reject.

We have come to realize since Durkheim that social facts are and are not *things* (actually, for Durkheim himself they are at once things and representations, as Lévi-Strauss rightly recalled[11]), and their definition is established with more difficulty than he imagined. But modern social anthropology has made a serious contribution to their definition in its insistence that the observer sees things from within (as integrated

[9] Marcel Mauss, "Les Civilisations," in *Civilisation, le mot et l'idée* (Paris, Centre International de Synthèse, 1e semaine, fasc. 2, 1930), p. 86.

[10] As for instance "ritual status" and "secular status" in H. N. C. Stevenson, "Status Evaluation in the Hindu Caste System," Curl Bequest Prize Essay 1953, in *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, vol. 84 (1954), p. 45–65.

[11] Jules Monnerot, *Les faits sociaux ne sont pas des choses* (Paris, 1946). Claude Lévi-Strauss in G. Gurvitch and W. E. Moore, *Twentieth Century Sociology* (New York, 1945), t. II, p. 528.

in the society which he studies) and from without. Evans-Pritchard invites us to consider the movement from one point of view to the other as an effort of translation.[12] This translation in fact involves fusing the language of the inquiry and the language of the monograph in one, constructing new concepts which englobe the two. In this task it is not sufficient to translate the indigenous words, for it frequently happens that the ideas which they express are related to each other by more fundamental ideas *even though these are unexpressed.* Fundamental ideas literally "go without saying" and have no need to be distinct, that is tradition.[13] Only their corollaries are explicit. The caste system for example appears as a perfectly coherent theory once one adds the necessary but implicit links to the principles that the people themselves give.

We are not speaking here of a stratum of permanently unconscious ideas, for these ideas can well come to light when the thought moves on another level. Let us recall here the *Gestalttheorie's* analysis of perception: in the same way that the object which I look at is seen against a non looked-at background, in the same way thought detaches itself at each moment from a background which although familiar is left on one side. The difficulty is that the thing is true at the same time at a multitude of levels. Each field of thought, each point of view itself rests upon a simplification, but thought is discursive and it can not only explore one field, but make one point of view succeed another and, by combining in this way different simplifications, reconstruct the complexity of the datum. Everybody has experience of the flagrant contradictions in popular thought which derive, however unconsciously, from the desire to retrieve the reality which a unilateral statement has missed.

If common thought simplifies itself in this way at each instant, the vocation of the sociologist is, in a sense, inverse. His understanding consists in replacing the simple in the complex, the small in the great, in lighting up a restricted area by bringing back to it its environment which common thought (and often, following it, thought in general) suppresses. The sociologist has to construct a view in which the representation is preserved as it presents itself and at the same time is seen in its relation to its non-conscious counterpart. Nor is this enough, since it is also necessary to reestablish the relation between the diverse fields which thought can successively choose.

For example, it seems that the opposition of the sacred to the profane has frequently been misunderstood. The two poles have been reified as if we had to do with a dichotomy in the material data and not with a

[12] E. E. Evans-Pritchard, *Social Anthropology* (London, 1951), ch. IV.

[13] Cf. M. Mauss, quoting a Missionary from Korea, in *Revue de l'Histoire des Religions* (Paris, 1902), p. 43 sq.: customs are, like language, a property of which the owner is unconscious.

polarity inherent to thought.[14] Everything looks as if the mind was incapable of taking a point of view embracing both and was forced, in order to function, to define successively two complementary fields. I am able at a certain moment to think of the world from the point of view of the profane because at another moment I shall reconsider it from the point of view of the sacred. (Secondarily, it may be the case that certain beings or objects may be classed more or less permanently in one or the other category but that is not essential.) One cannot for example ask oneself what is sacred for a modern unbeliever without asking correlatively what is profane for him. We obscure everything if we consider a man in his church without considering him correlatively in his workshop, or if we forget to confront the thought and the act. This is truly comparative religion; ordinarily one compares theologies, but dogmas or texts can cover very diverse practices or the reverse. Still more widely, what should be compared is the relation between what is religious and what is not. As Mauss with his admirable and deceptive simplicity said: "A sociological explanation is finished when one has seen *what it is* that people believe and think, and *who are* the people who believe and think that."[15]

In India one difficulty presents itself immediately to the observer, that of knowing how to speak of what he observes without engaging from the start in arbitrary assumptions. For example, to be able to speak of a god, it would be necessary to find constancy in his attributes, his qualities, his cult. But what are we to do when what is true here is false elsewhere, when – to take the most serious contradiction imaginable – the same god is a vegetarian here and a meat-eater there? Certain authors of the pre-sociological period have solved the problem by adding arbitrary decisions to the results of observation, so that the same god is regarded by some as "dravidian", as "aryan" by others. The true solution is simple in principle: the constancy which we cannot find at the level of individual beings is very often revealed when we rise to the level of the relations between these beings. In this way the sort of nightmare of perpetual diversity which haunts the naive observer is banished. It may happen that sometimes the Shaivites sometimes the Vaishnavites may be tolerant in the matter of meat-eating, but the fact is that everywhere they tend to be opposed from this point of view. Let us here recall the decisive advantages of a localised study: everything is confused if one collects together as in the columns of a dictionary the data from different places and times, because we have not to do with things, but with structural facts: they do not exist in themselves but only in relation to others,

[14] This is to some extent the case in: Roger Caillois, *L'Homme et le Sacré* (Paris, 1939).

[15] Auditors' notes, unpublished, from the lectures on "Sin and Expiation in the Pacific" (Collège de France, 1935–36).

in a particular place and for particular people. Only this view allows us to describe the phenomena in all their diversity without adding to or subtracting from them.

It is true that the method thus becomes more complicated. But thus also finally simple formulations and principles are attained. The notion of "structure" is indispensable. Contrary to widespread anthropological usage, the word will be taken here in a strictly limited sense, as hinted at above, close to that given to it by Lévi-Strauss (and in the *Gestalttheorie* and in phonology)[16] and more general at the same time than in English social anthropology where only the expression "social structure" is in use.

The difficulty in indological studies in general is that of discovering what Mauss called the "whole", in the interior of which relations can be studied as a structure. Put another way: what are the data which go together, and where are we to draw the boundary of this assembly of data? It is here that the sociological perspective is indispensable. To return to religion, between a particular god and, at the other end, this sort of unwieldy dictionary which is Hinduism, we have to separate off wholes which can be taken in at a glance, as it were, and compared. The level of grouping may be spatial, as in a temple, or temporal: it is for sociological observation to tell. Experience shows that the cults, for instance, of a territorial unit present us with a valuable "whole" such as could not be directly found in much larger spatial or chronological frameworks, or, *a fortiori*, in texts.[17]

It is necessary here to consider for a while an important objection which can be levelled at our approach. According to some, it would fit the study of popular, or lower levels of civilisation, not that of higher, scholarly, speculative levels: the vital core, the highest achievements of the Indian genius would remain forever beyond our grasp. In retort to this, we might ask to begin with whether any other serious approach is available. Great as the achievements of philology have been, it has left much to be completed. And when rigorous scholarship and personal culture and intuition are missing, the field is open to a current of syncretic ideas which claims, on the whole, to reach the unity of human thought without going into the differences of specific civilisations. This attitude, which cannot be called scientific, is responsible for a whole literature of superficial comparison between East and West, intended for understanding but actually fostering little more than confusion.

[16] Cl. Lévi-Strauss, in *Word* (New York), I, 2, Aug. 1945. "Structure" in this sense is used only about a system in which the interdependence between its "elements" is so close that they cannot be considered in themselves, but on the contrary can be defined by their position in the system. One may see in this characteristic the mark of the eminent complexity of social facts, which Auguste Comte insisted upon.

[17] Cf. L. Dumont, "Définition structurale d'un dieu populaire tamoul...," *Journal Asiatique*, t. CCXLI (Paris, 1953), p. 255–270.

The objection just mentioned seems to rest on the assumed heterogeneity of popular culture and higher civilisation. But this is so difficult to maintain that the idea is rather of the "popular" being a mere degradation of the "superior". True, many of the modern Hindu reformers seem to have thought, for the sake of action, that it was so. But how can this be true when the chronological succession, in the texts, is from Vedism to Hinduism? To explain this, one has appealed to a "substratum" (of which more below), and is this not a case of the "lower" entering into the "upper"? Actually the two levels are in constant interplay.[18] Without going into details, we can safely postulate some degree of homogeneity between what we know from direct observation and from the literature.

While it may reasonably be hoped that the set of relations or "structures" discovered in the present can be fruitfully applied to the understanding of past evidence, it should be emphasized that this extension can be established only in the most critical way, and should be demonstrated in each case. This is a second stage of the research, of which we can hardly yet offer any convincing example, as the task of opening up the present appears more urgent.[19]

If sociology derives value from a structural analysis of defined "wholes", at the same time it can assist indology in finding a middle way between totalitarian mysticism on one hand and the atomism which lies in wait for the philologist on the other. Hinduism or Indian civilisation is not the great monolith that some would have us consider it, there are major cleavages, but these do not always lie where it has been imagined. The most disastrous of these imaginary divisions which has been imposed, and is still imposed, on Indian culture is the so-called distinction between Aryan and Dravidian features.

For the moment let us only point out that it results more from the subjectivity of the western observer than from the objective data. In imposing this distinction our western ethnocentrism has led us to distort the object of our study. However much Indian studies, together with others, have succeeded generally in destroying this ethnocentricity they have remained a prisoner to it in a certain sense. Philologists looked in ancient India first of all for their Aryan, or rather Indo-European cousins (if not indeed their grandfathers). But after all one had to come down from Vedism to Hinduism, and this caused some embarrassment. In order to explain the birth of Hinduism from Vedism it was found necessary to refer to what the linguists call a substratum. This substratum once labelled as (mainly) Dravidian, Indian culture appeared as

[18] This interplay has been studied in European Folklore, cf. Adolph Bach, *Deutsche Volkskunde* (Leipzig, 1937).

[19] For one such attempt, see Dumont, *Hierarchy and Marriage Alliance* (see p. 61, n. 12), Mixed Unions in the Law-Books.

the juxtaposition of reputedly Aryan and Dravidian elements. That is to say, it vanished in a truly fantastic dichotomy. This is how, as pointed out above, ethnologists turned their attention for so long to the so-called local substratum. They were thus indirectly prisoners of philological ethnocentricity which relied on their help to complete a decidedly insufficient picture. For Indian civilisation, looked at in a narrow western perspective, did not quite cease to appear as a bizarre outgrowth, as though our Aryan cousins had not turn out as they should.

At the same time, ethnology made a positive contribution, however incomplete as yet, in leading to a reversal of perspective: everything becomes clearer when we move no longer from considerations of Indo-European similarities but from considerations of "primitive" similarities in India. Certainly we find throughout India elementary material with which we are familiar from the ethnology of others parts of the world. But we should now come to recognize that these more or less "primitive" elements in India are profoundly modified by the fact that they become there parts of an original and complex construction. Thus in the matter of castes, it was essential to understand, thanks to what we know from elsewhere, the, as it were, immediate source of impurity. This, to a large extent, has been done.[20] But we have also to go further and consider the distinctively Indian elaboration of the idea which tends in the long run to render profoundly religious things which we are in the habit of considering as profane, and *vice-versa*. For the sociologist the decisive step is accomplished once a quality like impurity is attributed in a permanent manner to certain people. There to a great extent will be found the clue to Indian complexity.

In place of imaginary dichotomies, we find examples of genuine ones. Let us consider one, and that only tentatively, regarding the general relation of thought to society. Some have concerned themselves with studying Indian thought in itself and apart from its relations with society, while others have looked at some Hindu beliefs and speculations as reflecting or directly idealising the social order of castes. As for the sociologist, he is convinced that thought as found within Indian society itself is predominantly utilitarian in character, and he would like to sift a good deal of the literature from this point of view. But, once this is said, he thinks he can find in the highest Indian thought a negation of caste which is more subtle than the explicit negations of the reformers. A particular institution should here attract our attention. In this highly compartmentalised society there is not only a certain stage in life when a man should leave the world, but also a man's right to leave his caste is recognized and he may literally die to his caste in order to consecrate himself to that which transcends man, in order to become a sanyasi

[20] Cf. Srinivas, *op.cit.*, ch. IV, and Kane, P. V., *History of Dharmaśāstra*, vol. II, Part I (Poona, 1941), p. 179.

(*saṁnyāsin*). This counterbalances in a way the existence of castes, and is rightly included in the definition of the system.

Now, what one is in the habit of calling Indian Thought is for the very great part the thought of the sanyasi, that is to say of someone who has denied society, who is dead to society and has transcended his caste and castes in general. Knowledge of the absolute presupposes not only the renunciation of the world but the rejection of social forms. In fact things are more complicated, for the sanyasi although dead to society not merely has the right to speak but also is a sought after spiritual teacher; his thought, which is a negation of caste, in this way filters back into the caste. The two kinds of thought, or thought on one side and worldly wisdom on the other, blend; one can live in the world and still make the philosophy of the sanyasi one's own. It is here, around the dialogue of the sanyasi and the man of the world, that religio-philosophical speculation revolves, concealing a contradiction, a dichotomy. M. Nehru[21] has rightly noted that the thought of the sanyasi is much closer to our own than that of the man within the caste, because the sanyasi like us exists as an idividual. (On the other hand, his point of departure is the negation of the world, while ours is its affirmation.)

Two widely spread attitudes seem to be equally insufficient. One praises and admires Indian spirituality while deeming the caste system abominable, and would wish the former to be preserved, the latter to be destroyed.[22] The other would justify the social system by its spiritual achievements. In fact, society and spirituality are here complementary (linked and opposed to each other at the same time). To put it in the language of western common sense, it is because the society is oppressive and inhuman that he who wishes to think freely leaves it, but, it should be added and insisted upon, his *exit* is socially acknowledged and appreciated: not only he is free to leave, he will also be fed and honoured as a result and will enjoy a greater liberty than perhaps anywhere else, being no longer of the world.

Let us now return more closely to our subject in order to formulate a few propositions which appear to emerge primarily from research, but also from what is more generally known, once considered in the light of research. They are of unequal certainty, and the aim is to delineate a wholesale, if temporary, perspective.

First, of course, comes caste. It is impossible here to give even a summary view of the caste system. As far as it is concerned, the differences between area and area would only appear to be differences of

[21] J. Nehru, *op.cit.*, p. 136, 249.

[22] Albert Béguin, "Images et Problèmes de l'Inde," *Esprit* (Paris), mai–juin 1952, p. 950.

detail and not structural unless, as certain of our colleagues think, research is not yet sufficiently advanced for us to be able to judge. The system of values is quite clear and coherent. Bouglé's scheme can be adopted here, and somewhat developed. The difficulty begins when one confronts the values with the actual behaviour, whose orientation seems to point out, apart from values properly called, also other factors which may be called underlying, or unexpressed, or submerged, values. Of these the center in traditional terms is largely the king, as Hocart pointed out.

On the whole, the essential form of the system is of a hierarchical polarity. One might say that India has institutionalised inequality just as we are trying to do the same with equality. In the relation of two men modern western society presupposes equality to the point that delicate situations are likely to arise where subordination is necessary. India on the contrary emphasizes inequality to the point that situations tending to equality are unstable and conflict is called for to solve them by the establishment of a gradation. This might well be the basic reason why dispute is so endemic: however developed it may be, the system has not succeeded in establishing a perfect gradation of the whole of social life.

The postulate of the unity of India is seriously challenged in the field of kinship. Dravidian speaking areas are dominated by institutions like the marriage of cross-cousins, which one of us has tried to sum up under an institution defined as "marriage alliance" (see p. 61, n. 12). The north seems at first sight to have a quite different kinship system. However, the study is here little advanced, and the existing literature is probably to a great extent misleading. It is not improbable that tendencies similar to those which are expressed in the southern institutions are not completely absent. For instance the function of alliance in the south – the relating (indirectly and informally) of unilinear groups – is perhaps performed here by hypergamy which, if one thinks about it, has a similar effect. In this case, the difference would then lie mainly in the articulation of kinship and caste.

A temporary conclusion which comes up forcibly in the present state of our knowledge is that the territorial factor, the relation to the soil is not, in India as a whole, one of the primary factors in social organisation. It is a secondary factor in relation to the two fundamental factors of kinship and caste. It certainly qualifies them, but does not replace or dominate them. This is perhaps less important in itself than as it modifies accepted ideas about the "Village Communities", traceable to Sir Sumner Maine and beyond him. Although the best observers, like Baden-Powell, had reacted long ago, a sort of tradition has established itself which requires critical examination.[23] In our own time, the same

[23] Cf. hereafter the review of *Village India*.

ideas appear in the uncritical choice by a number of anthropologists of the "village" as the frame of their enquiry, or in the apparent desire of others to inflect the rules of exogamy in a territorial sense.[24] These same western ideas of the "village community" seem to be responsible for a recent failure of legislation in India. With the generous intention of relating jurisdiction to those whom it affects certain judicial powers have been granted to local elected assemblies which amongst us would be called municipal councils and which are called there *pañcāyat*, a word which traditionally designates a caste assembly or council. In a word they have tried to transfer the idea of the assembly or *pañcāyat* from a caste-group to the multi-caste village. The result, according to our own observations confirmed by reports from elsewhere (all in U.P.) is a standstill since the enterprise comes up against the total disinterest of the elected judges. The institution of the caste *pañcāyat* rests on the solidarity of the caste-group, which is highly sensitive to certain kinds of offences, while the assumed solidarity of the village is simply non-existent at that level.

In the field of kinship, as in that of caste (and, as a consequence, in the village), one has to recognize complementarities. In the final analysis traditional India did not recognize the individual as he appears in our modern theory of social life. One frequently finds it illuminating to substitute for the idea of an individual agent that of an agent formed by a pair of individuals: a pair of allies or of brothers-in-law, or in turn the pair constituted by a superior and an inferior. Here, in the south, we have the two most basic wholes that can be found, the two elementary structures upon which more complex wholes are based. In the north, following what has just been said, one may hazard the idea that these two structures are in fact one: kinship looses its specific characteristic, it does not exist in the face of caste, for in a hypergamous milieu my ally (brother-in-law) is *ipso facto* my superior or my inferior.

Thus far for the broad lines of social organisation proper. We wish to add a few words on the relation of social organisation and culture.

The abundance of repetitions and duplications in Indian culture and in Indian languages has frequently been remarked upon as have the multiplication of traits which seem to be functionally equivalent. At first sight this cultural proliferation would seem to correspond to the proliferation of groups, to the segmentary complexity of the society. Ethnologists have described it as the result of a sedimentary process, a piling up of traits where the new does not replace the old but rather imposes itself upon it, making India a sort of history museum. To us it would seem that this characteristic of the culture is to be related with the hierarchical aspect of the society. First of all, we must distinguish between two forms of multiplication, that in which the form is different and the

[24] Hereafter, p. 55.

content the same and that, with which we are solely concerned here, in which the forms are identical but of which the contents are different. It is useful to distinguish between particular, intrinsic content (be it linguistic, technical, religious, etc.) and the general, social, extrinsic content which by and large relates to prestige. This is not peculiar to India but India has extreme examples. Hocart spoke of "snobbery"[25] but we have to go a little further. One may formulate the following proposition (which naturally has to be verified in each case): every time a borrowed cultural trait does not replace the corresponding old trait but is juxtaposed to it in function, it is because it has not been borrowed for its special, intrinsic function, but because it has a general function of prestige. (Thus one may see Indians even superimposing articles of dress on their bodies. The older dress does not disappear because it is technically useful, but another is put over it as a mark of prestige.)

In this society everything which appertains to superiors is noble, prestigious, almost sacred. Thus the customs of the Brahmans, such as child marriage, are revered, however little connection they may appear to have with sacerdotal purity which is the essential feature of Brahmanic preeminence. It is then easy to understand how people in this situation are inclined to borrow by imitation without for all that renouncing their own customs. They preserve the latter wherever possible even though they limit their practice to the internal life of the group. We can then imagine what occurs with the impact of the Europeans who combined a social superiority – the exercise of power made them participate in the royal dignity –, with a technical superiority. Some anthropologists have described this complex situation in which the Brahmans as poles of imitation have been deplaced in part, and inequally at the different social levels, by the English.[26] To sum up with a simple picture, think of the typist tapping at his machine while seated on a chair with his legs folded underneath him: what is the use of chair and table, if not to minister to the dignity of the employee or of the place?[27]

To return to traditional India this tendency to borrow while still conserving shows itself even in religion. Here, it shows that the Hindu belief in gods is secondary and derived, in relation to the fundamental religious values of caste. One might say that all that appears to be social is in fact religious and that all that appears religious is in fact social. This proposition may shock some people: are we not in the habit of thinking of India as the land of religion *par excellence?* And of course this is too summary a statement. It remains the case that the beliefs are

[25] A. M. Hocart, *The Life-Giving Myth* (London, 1952), ch. XIII; also *Caste*, passim.

[26] For instance Aiyappan, *Iravas*, p. 1.

[27] In traditional style, one sits on the floor and writes on a low desk.

not what we supposed and do not bear where we imagined. About the great themes of Hindu speculation, it must be remembered that philosophy is not separated from religion, which renders speculation more accessible to the masses (p. 17), but here again we ought to distinguish between what is believed and what it is considered good taste to believe.

Everywhere in fact the extrinsic is found. We may doubt whether Hinduism would have shown such a marked preference for vegetarianism, had it not experienced the great heresies of Jainism and Buddhism. In our own times Hinduism has repelled the onslaught of Christianity by integrating those Christian values which were most dangerous to it. This integration, while it may be accompanied by certain internal transformations, consists often in the juxtaposition of traits which on a purely religious level would be contradictory. This process teaches us a great deal about one aspect of the reconquest of India against the heresies by Hinduism.[28] This appears to have been a crucial moment in the constitution of Hinduism such as we know it today. Moreover it teaches us in an exemplary manner how foreign elements can be introduced into religion, which we sociologists have a tendency to look at as a perfectly integrated whole. Facts of the same nature certainly are not lacking elsewhere, but in India they appear in a clear-cut form together with a rich material which helps us to understand them. Once the major cleavages have been marked out, the cultural proliferation leads us as it were by the hand from equivalence to equivalence up to the structure of each and every set.

To sum up, we have seen how the hierarchical aspect of the society makes for a cultural proliferation through a sort of psychology of borrowing. At the same time we have seen examples of the relation of categories or values to behaviour. In all this we have been concerned to show how at the present moment – in an admittedly hypothetical manner – certain simple, easily interrelated principles can, starting with the social organisation, give a view of Indian civilisation both in its permanence and in its history.

If history is the movement by which a society reveals itself as what it is, there are, in a sense, as many qualitatively different histories as there are societies, and India, precisely because she is indifferent to history, has carefully laid it down in the form of her society, her culture, her religion. All this, far from being the mechanical juxtaposition of "Aryan" and "Dravidian" traits, is a historical creation. To atomize it into eventual factors or cultural elements teaches us nothing about the

[28] Mr. Nehru tells us how he searched for an answer to a question of André Malraux about how Hinduism expelled the heresies. But he himself gives the answer when he writes (about the Afghan period): "as of old, India was subconsciously reacting to the new situation, trying to absorb the foreign element and herself changing somewhat in the process" (*Discovery of India*, p. 170, 240).

spirit which has welded these materials, given them a form, and which may be perceived in that form more clearly than anywhere else.

One final word about the present social and political problems of India which would appear to call for the attention of the sociologist. It might be urged against us that rather than spending our energies upon the analysis of social relations, and then turning our attention to classical India, we should try to find some way in which our knowledge might assist the reformer in solving the numerous and painful problems which perplex India today. It has been said that the ethnologist is pledged to conservatism. And it is true that to preoccupy oneself with the hidden relations of social phenomena is a poor preparation for action. But if to the reformer the sociologist appears timorous and inert, to the sociologist the reformer often seems limited and desperately superficial. It is far better to realise that here we have to separate opposed and necessary vocations each of which is all the better if it is kept distinct from the other. The reformer can make best use of sociological work if that work is done strictly within the limits of sociology. The sociologist does his work and it is for the reformer to understand it, if he wishes, with a view to acting upon it.

Naturally there is room for an applied sociology by the side of pure sociology and in fact it exists already. Governments employ trained research workers to collect desired information or to assist in defining action on precise points. In the United States and even more in India, pure and applied Indian Sociology are frequently confused, probably because it is the interest in application, the desire for action, which provides the means of pure sociological research. This is perhaps one reason why Indian Sociology has not yet taken a clear view of itself and of its objectives.

Finally we should stress the personal nature of the views which have been offered here. The subject is still in its infancy and others may define it in a quite different manner. This is a reason for us to affirm one clear orientation as a tendency among others.

VILLAGE STUDIES

Village India, Studies in the Little Community. *Edited by* McKim Marriott. *(American Anthropological Association, Memoir N° 83, 1955.) xviii, 264 p. (Comparative Studies of Cultures and Civilisations, N° 6. Editors Robert Redfield and Milton Singer.)*

India's Villages. *A collection of articles originally published in The Economic Weekly of Bombay, Introduction by M. N. Srinivas (West Bengal Government Press, 1955). 198 p.*

The appearance of these two collections by various writers marks a step forward in Indian sociology. Professor Srinivas and Dr. Marriott are to be congratulated upon their energy and enterprise. For various reasons the second volume did not come into our hands until it was too late to consider it in any detail in these pages but other reasons also lead us to lay our emphasis upon the first volume. The essays in *India's Villages* are, owing to the circumstances in which they were written, tentative and for the most part unrelated to each other. As Professor Srinivas points out in his Introduction, some contributions were written after three or four months in the field and each author was given the freedom to write about some aspect of village life which struck him as particularly interesting or important. This variety of information from all parts of India raises for consideration a major problem for the sociologist: is the village indeed the social fact which it has for so long been assumed to be? Is it possible or profitable to compare villages as such or should we not rather most profit by this mass of information by considering it from another point of view? The writers in both volumes seem to be irked, some more consciously than others, by their confinement within one village and many of their shrewdest insights in fact point to conclusions which would overthrow the village as a social fact of the first order. It is with this problem most in mind that we consider the essays of the first volume in the following pages.

It seems to us that the immediate comparison to be made is between *Village India* and *African Political Systems* which appeared sixteen years earlier. It is, as that was, the first text book which enables us to take a comparative view of our area and to define the problems which call for further research. But to raise the comparison between the two books is to become aware of disturbing differences between them. *African Political Systems* was the result of field-work done for the most

part in the 1930's by anthropologists who, despite their varying differences of emphasis, shared a common view of their object and of their methods. The *Preface* by the late Professor Radcliffe-Brown is a symbol of this fundamental homogeneity. The contributors to *Village India* on the contrary share little in the way of common assumptions and the *Foreword* by the general editors of the series does not set out to do more than summarize the contents and discuss them from the most general point of view. Again, *Village India* is more "junior" than *African Political Systems* in that few of the authors have been able to ponder their material for a sufficient length of time. The seminar upon which the book is based was conducted only a year after the majority of the contributors had returned from the field. The articles have then, for the most part, the value and the weaknesses of initial reports.

Social Anthropology has grown up in Africa and this to such an extent that its African orientation has become almost implicit, an unconscious feature of its existence. Despite the much longer period of Anglo-Indian contact, the sociology of India has only properly begun in the last ten years. It might be assumed *a priori* that such a new branch of sociology would run the risk of being overshadowed by the conclusions of more advanced branches and fail to define its distinctive approaches, a stage necessarily prior to a discussion of general similarities. One of the axioms which gave such vigour to English social anthropology in the thirties was the insistence that the field-worker approach his area untied by questions of a historical or cultural nature and that he be concerned with social wholes in themselves, to describe and analyse their contemporary functioning. At such a period Africa was an ideal field for study. But the Indian sociologist dare not isolate the area of his enquiry from neighbouring areas or from history. This is not to say that Indian sociology ought to be quite different from the sociology of other areas, in fact we would maintain that the problems which India poses are pre-eminently those which the subject as a whole will have to face sooner or later. What, we may surmise, will be the condition of a sociologist in the Africa of the future? The valuable studies which have been made of African societies will be not merely comparative material which will help him but historical material which he would be unwise to neglect. Even more, these studies will be a part of the peoples' own history; African societies will have been made conscious in the way that centuries of civilisation have made India conscious and that consciousness will alter the facts themselves. To give a more precise example, the cultural unity of the Nilotic peoples demonstrated by Seligman, by Evans-Pritchard and other workers cannot help but be transformed into some sense of social unity. To have been made aware that one is a Nilote and that there are others *like* one is to have at once a different attitude to them, to others and to one's self. These remarks

have been made by way of showing that Indian sociology can not only profit itself at the present time by becoming aware of its distinctive problems and methods but can also profit social anthropology in general and in the future. Above all the Indian sociologist has to become conscious of the suppositions which he takes over from more advanced studies and to progress by adapting them to his particular field.

To try to understand a local Indian society as an anthropologist in the past approached a primitive society elsewhere in the world, or as Indian tribes have been approached, is to fail at the outset. The Indian sociologist must keep his attention upon a constant interaction between a general idea and the local working out of that idea. If we wish to understand the situation of a Brahman in a particular village we must know what the Brahman stands for in Indian civilisation and reciprocally our understanding of the latter will be enriched by our local study. It seems to us that there is no question of *either-or* here, but of both. This interaction is a social fact of Indian society and must be reflected in the mind of each investigator. This does not preclude a division of labour at another level. For this reason it seems to us that the problem set out for the seminar upon which *Village India* is based is not the same problem which each field-worker in India has, in fact, to face. The problem of the seminar was presented in the form of two interconnected questions:

> How relevant are holistic methods of analysis for studies of villages in India? And if such studies make use of such holistic methods of analysis, then what relevance do those studies have for understanding problems which concern all of India?

It would appear from this formulation that we are being presented with the problem of the microcosm. To what extent, we are asked, is an Indian village a microcosm reflecting the macrocosm of Indian civilisation? But India, sociologically speaking, is not made up of villages.[1] It is true that the *idea* of the village is present in Indian literature and thought and can affect the unwary sociologist as much as the villager or the modern Indian politician. To pose the opposition of village to civilisation is at once to have given the village a sociological reality which similar groups may have elsewhere and to have been deceived by the appearances. Much of the material presented by the contributors to this volume suggests in fact the inadequacy of the village as a unit of study. The wide reception given to Professor Srinivas's introduction of the term *sanskritisation*[2] shows that it answered a need arising from the

[1] See p. 18 above.

[2] Srinivas rejects the term Brahmanisation (*The Coorgs*, p. 30) to describe the rise in status of inferior castes because certain Brahmanic rites are confined to the Brahmans and "the two other 'twice-born' castes." This surprising confusion of *varṇa* with caste, theory with fact, does not take into account the relativity of the term "twice-born" in social life. See Cohn's article in the volume under discussion

microcosm-macrocosm opposition. Of the authors in the present work none has more clearly seen the need of a new approach than McKim Marriott, in his article appropriately entitled *Little Communities in an Indigenous Civilisation.* One could not hope for a better analysis of the general problem than is contained in the early pages of his article. His later conceptualisation of a dual process of universalisation and parochialisation is, we feel, more descriptive than analytic and the rich material that he has at his disposal is susceptible of further structural analysis.

The *idea* of the village in Indian civilisation, its reinforcement by Mahatma Gandhi, the pragmatic interests of early government officers and the influence of anthropological methods elsewhere in the world have created this fundamental supposition that the clue to an understanding of Indian society lies in the village. Moreover there is an obsession with defining the *unit* of study as if this were the prior requisite to an analysis of the society; a confusion, that is to say, between the necessary delimitation of a field of enquiry with the results of that enquiry. A field-worker takes a village as a convenient centre for his investigations and all too easily comes to confer upon that village a kind of sociological reality which in fact it does not possess. The architectural and demographic fact which the village is lures us away from a structural perspective, where things exist only in the relations which are the proper objects of study, to an atomistic or elemental point of view where things exist in themselves. The substantial reality of the village deceives us into doing what we normally would not do in a social analysis and into assuming *a priori* that when people refer to an object by name they mean by that designation what we ourselves mean when we speak of it. In fact we should be on our guard and examine the social referent of the term. When we do this we frequently find that the referent is not the whole village but merely the local caste group of the speaker. Whether a man is speaking of his own village or of another village, unless he positively specifies another caste by name, he is referring to his caste fellows. He may say that his daughter is married into such and such village because the people of that village are "good people". He does not include in his judgment the large number of people from other castes in that village whom he may indeed regard as inferior or "bad". In such a statement the social referent is a group of caste fellows considered more particularly as affines and with regard to their standing *within* the caste. Such qualifications as these are implicit in the statement and taken for granted by both speaker and hearer. In this example the village as an architectural and demographic fact is secondary to the social facts of kinship. Again in matters of ritual status one can hear the same village

and particularly his treatment of the sacred thread on page 73. We prefer to limit the term sanskritisation to strictly linguistic contexts.

being spoken of as of high or low status according to the caste of the speaker who thinks only of the presence of his caste fellows in that village and of their position relative to his own. In Gujerat, for instance, a village which contains the aristocracy of one caste may contain the lowest level of another but since each speaker will refer to his own caste fellows there, no one will attempt to bring these two caste groups together to evaluate the status of the village as such, will not, that is to say, try to confer upon it a social reality transcending caste.

Such considerations as the above spring to mind when one is faced with a common conception which in one form or another appears throughout *Village India* (and is not absent from *India's Villages*). The conception of "village solidarity" which is said to "affirm itself" seems all too often to be a presupposition imposed upon the facts. Fortunately much of the field-works is of sufficiently high quality to cast doubt on this conception. Professor Srinivas's article *The Social System of a Mysore Village* gives us an excellent account of the significance and position of a dominant caste in relation to so-called "village solidarity". In the light of our opening remarks it is relevant to point out that Srinivas was, we believe, the first in point of time to bring into Indian sociology this notion of dominance first elaborated in the analysis of African political systems.[3]

At this point we are only concerned with one aspect of the dominant caste. Srinivas tells us that "Rampura is a well defined structural entity which commands the loyalty of all who live there, irrespective of their affiliation to different castes." But what precisely are the loyalties of these lower castes? In order to answer this question we may examine the details which he gives us of legal proceedings within the village and between different villages. In Rampura and the surrounding area there are caste courts either dealing with the affairs of caste fellows within one village or with wider matters affecting members of one caste in several villages. But, as Srinivas points out, the settlement of disputes within the village occasionally brings out the importance of the dominant caste and the dependence of other castes upon it. He tells us that Rampura is governed by elders of the dominant *Okkaliga* caste who are so powerful that cases pending in Government courts may be withdrawn at their order. These elders constitute the court for their caste fellows in Rampura and for other castes of the village. "Even now" we are told "in the rural areas taking disputes to the local elders is considered to be better than taking them to the urban law courts." A man who does go to the urban

[3] On p. 18 of the present volume he defines the dominant caste as follows: "a caste may be said to be 'dominant' when it preponderates numerically over the other castes, and when it also wields preponderate economic and political power. A large and powerful caste group can more easily be dominant if its position in the local hierarchy is not too low."

law courts "is thought to be flouting the authority of the elders and therefore acting against the solidarity of the village". These elders are competent to settle disputes involving the customs of other castes and they do so impartially even though they may regard their own caste customs as superior. In Rampura minority castes "seem only too ready to take their disputes to elders of the *Okkaliga* caste for settlement. The sentiment that disputes should be settled within the castes does not seem very strong." Poor people even take their family disputes to be settled by their *Okkaliga* patrons who employ them in the traditional *jajmāni* system. "*Okkaliga* may be called upon to decide cases in which all the litigants are Brahmans or Untouchables, or Muslims." In fact these members of the dominant caste have the power to set aside the decision of a caste court if they consider it to be "unjust." This final point is important but before discussing its implications we must quote in full the two very important paragraphs which conclude the section we have summarised:

> The elders of the dominant caste are spokesmen for the village. Trouble would ensue for a person who did not show them proper respect. They are able to supply or withhold information about people living in the area. Their co-operation may be essential for rendering effective a sentence passed against an individual in a caste court. Their friendship may be needed in some future transaction in land or cattle, or in soliciting a loan from someone, or in finding a bride.
>
> By comparison with taking a dispute to the village elders, taking a dispute to the caste court is a procedure not unattended by an element of risk. A man can be certain of receiving consideration, if not kindness at the hands of the elders of his own village; he cannot be as certain of it at the hands of his caste elders, some of whom belong to different villages and some of whom he does not know well. A caste court is not unlikely to decide a case entirely on a point of law – a thing which is less likely to happen in a court of village elders who are well acquainted both with the persons and with the circumstances of each case.

We are told that a man who flouts the authority of the elders "is acting against the solidarity of the village". Later we are told more significantly that "trouble would ensue" for anyone who failed to respect the elders and there follows a list of the economic factors and sanctions which the elders, as representatives of the dominant caste, can bring to bear. We can see clearly from all this that the power of the dominant caste at every point transcends that of the other castes even to the extent that the decision of a caste court can be set aside by the elders of the dominant caste. Cases which involve lower castes in more than one village may be referred to a caste court but (a) as we have seen the decision is not final and (b) the power of each local section of the *Okkaliga* caste in each village has to be taken into account not merely by the caste elders who hear the dispute but also by the litigants themselves who do not wish

to offend some powerful patron whether of their own or of their opponent.

We are now in a better position to reply to our question about the loyalties of the people of Rampura. It would seem that loyalty is not to the village as such but to the dominant *Okkaliga* whose power is both political and economic. Even when disputes occur between "villages" it would appear from the evidence that these could be more appropriately described as disputes within the *Okkaliga* caste about land upon which the *Okkaliga* base their superiority. In such disputes the *Okkaliga* are supported by their dependents who have particular loyalties to particular *Okkaliga* families, not to the village. If the solidarity of the village means anything it is the solidarity of the local group of *Okkaliga*. In this connection it would be interesting to see to what extent Oscar Lewis' account of the lack of even this kind of solidarity is applicable elsewhere.[4]

Certain recent historical factors have brought about changes in village relations which, to a certain extent, reinforce the disposition to see the village as an isolated whole. As far as north-west India is concerned the original nature of the dominant caste emerges from the historical material that we have on what may be called the great *Jāṭ* complex which extended over U.P., Punjab and Gujerat. The pattern, which still in part survives, was based upon a process of lineage secession by which groups of kin founded new villages. The new villages at least temporarily recognized the superior position of the village of origin.[5]

This basic kinship organisation of villages within a certain area is perhaps more common than is often thought if indeed it is not an all-India phenomenon. At the very least we can be certain that each local caste group in a village recognizes itself as a part of a wider group which is not necessarily co-extensive with the caste or the sub-caste. An example of the diversity of such alignments can be found in Dr. Gough's article *The Social Structure of a Tanjore Village*. There, caste groups within the village recognize affiliation with wider groups (in this case sub-castes), extending over a distance of about a hundred miles for the Brahmans, who are also the dominant land-owing caste, down to about twenty miles for the low-caste *Paḷḷaṇs*. In Srinivas's area the *Okkaliga* have only risen to dominance in relatively recent times and it may be presumed that their village affiliations are different from those of the previous dominant caste which was Brahman. There are hints in Srinivas's account of ritual ties between the families of these land-owning Brahmans in

[4] Oscar Lewis, *Group Dynamics in a North India Village* (*Planning Commission, Government of India Press*, 1951).

[5] Our attention is drawn to these kin-related villages by McKim Marriott in his *Restatement* (*A. A.*, vol. 55, p. 137), a fuller discussion is found in Sir Denzil Ibbetson's *Punjab Census Report* 1881, in his own land-settlement report on the Karnal, and in other land-settlement reports of the period.

different villages but these appear to be fading as the land-ownership upon which they were based passes out of the hands of the Brahmans into those of rising *Okkaliga* families. If we are correct in our contention that the apparent solidarity of the village results in fact from the power of the dominant caste we may further suppose that in Mysore, as in the Punjab, major village affiliations are based upon the kin-relations of the dominant caste also. This does not preclude there being quite different affiliations for the minor or lower castes of these villages. When however a dominant caste ceases to be dominant, as is the case of the Brahmans of the Mysore village, while vestiges of the old grouping remain the relations base upon, it will necessarily not have the same significance that they formerly had. When this happens either the whole principle of village groupings breaks down and the villages are isolated or else a new alignment based upon the kin-ties of the new dominant caste tends to emerge. In the village described by Srinivas it would seem that it is the former which has taken place, a fact which would make it all the easier to see the village as an isolate.

To have appreciated the significance of the dominant caste is to challenge current and unquestioned assumptions about the *jajmāni* system which incorporation in Hindu society imposes. Indian sociology owes a great debt to Wiser for his account of the *jajmāni* system in U.P. which is the first full length description of it we have.[6]

Nevertheless some of Wiser's remarks have been uncritically accepted even at the expense of what common sense tells us. At the outset of his work Wiser finds in his village of Karimpur a net-work of service resembling the classical feudal system of Europe but with what he describes as a "mutuality" not found in the latter. This idea of a harmonious system of reciprocal service, despite its evident romanticism, has stuck, although any field-worker has only to think of his proud land-owning peasantry to realise that the more absolute the dominance the less is reciprocity recognized. From Wiser's figures we can see that in Karimpur only five of the forty-one Brahman families functioned as priests while the remainder were large and small land-owners served by others and recognizing no obligation to serve themselves. In this village the dominant caste was also the Brahman caste and, as so frequently happens when the one caste also stands in the two distinct structural positions, the two are confused in the analysis. Thus in Wiser's chart we are told that the Brahman and related castes are served by all and also serve the first nineteen castes of the village. In point of fact, as we have seen, this is not so.

The corrective emphasis is to be found in Hocart[7] who points the relation of ritual service to the king:

[6] W. H. Wiser, *The Hindu Jajmani System* (Lucknow, 1936), p. 9 et passim.
[7] A. M. Hocart, *Caste* (London, 1950), p. 68.

The King's state is reproduced in miniature by his vassals; the farmer has his court... the poor cultivators in the jungle have their retainers to play the part which they alone are qualified by heredity to play at births, weddings and funerals, but these retainers are the retainers of the community, the village, not of one lord.

Hocart is correct in emphasising the fact that these servants now serve more than one master but to speak of them as the servants of the whole village is to go too far. Whether in Mysore or in the U.P. the masters *par excellence* are the members of the dominant caste and only after them do the village servants serve others and each other. The extreme form of this relation of the dominant caste to the ritual servant castes is expressed by Lewis in his contribution to this volume:

The *Jāṭs* ... own all the land of the village, including ... the land upon which the houses of the other castes are built. In a sense, then, the other castes, even the Brahmans, are in the village at the sufferance of the *Jāṭs*.

It follows that in this condition of dependence the servant is bound to a certain extent by the social criteria of his masters and may not serve those whom his masters do not wish him to serve. Certainly it would appear that ideally there is a balance between the obligations of both sides. The lesser castes look to the dominant castes (as in ancient Hindu society people looked to the king) for protection and for food. Many of the changes taking place in modern India make the servant castes independent of the dominant caste both economically and politically, but equally the dominant castes are becoming independent of the services which once only the village servants could render. The man who shaves himself is under less obligation to the barber – the relation of hierarchic reciprocity is threatened. The precise condition of this relation in any particular local hierarchy has to be examined. We would suggest however that the particular position of the members of the dominant caste in the system of service shows that it is they who set the limits beyond which a caste that serves them may not serve others. Although they are the masters in terms of power their status is not so absolute that they can afford to allow promiscuity of service. This fundamental fact and its important implications have been masked by another confusion of distinct phenomena of which Wiser's work provides another example. Even supposing that we had no other grounds for stressing the ritual importance of certain servant castes, the figures which he cites would draw our attention to it. Although Wiser knew that the barber would not shave the Bhangi or the Muslim beggar because of objections which would be raised by the other *jajmāns*, he does not for all that clearly distinguish *jajmāni* relationships based upon purity and impurity beliefs from relationships of an economic nature. If the Bhangi of Karimpur is served by the goldsmith, the florist, carpenter and potter and not by

the Brahman, barber, water-bearer, and washerman this does not mean of course that the goldsmith, for example, is of lower status than the barber. Similarly the fact that the Bhangi and the village accountant serve members of all other castes does not mean that they can be in any way equated with each other. As Wiser points out the people of Karimpur are very "*jajmāni* minded" and tend to view all their transactions in terms of the system. But this should not prevent us from distinguishing relationships based upon ritual beliefs from those which are purely economic.

To return to the implications of the passage from Lewis's article which we have quoted. We are dealing with a highly complex situation, an understanding of which is obviously essential to an understanding of Indian civilisation. We know that the status of a particular caste is not measured immediately in terms of all-India notions but in relation to a particular local hierarchy headed by a particular Brahman caste. To exaggerate a little for the sake of emphasis this is to say that a caste in one area may have the highest status possible under the Brahmans of that area while continuing to practise customs which in another area would place it almost at the bottom of the local hierarchy. If the Brahmans in any area are not vegetarians then vegetarianism is unlikely to be a measure of ritual status. It seems to us then that, broadly speaking, a caste which is truly dominant must come immediately below the Brahmans in the local hierarchy and the standards of the Brahmans will to a certain extent be influenced by the customs of that dominant caste. Professor Srinivas with characteristic caution, says in this matter: "A large and powerful caste group can more easily be dominant if its position in the local caste hierarchy is not too low." Certainly it is almost inevitable that in any village there will be representatives from castes of admittedly superior status to the dominant caste. There will be clerks or traders and from this point of view the dominant caste may rank fourth. But these few members of higher castes must look for Brahmans outside the village or else be served by the Brahmans who serve the dominant caste and so admit parity with the latter; in neither case will they assert a ritual superiority in the face of the economic, political and numerical strength of the dominant caste. In some areas where very large castes show marked economic and ritual graduality, the Brahmans also have differing standards so that the low-class peasant will be served by a Brahman of a lower sub-caste of the same Brahman caste that serves his higher-class caste fellow. In short, a caste gets the Brahmans it deserves, but since the possibilities of Brahmanical conduct are almost infinite the dominant caste is not necessarily static.

From one important point of view it is however convenient to consider the dominant caste as static and that is the point of view of the castes

beneath it in the local hierarchy. For them it is, under the Brahmans, a model for conduct, and, as several contributors to this volume have noted, this relative distance was maintained in the not so distant past by the superior physical force of the dominant caste. A lower caste was not allowed to imitate its superior too closely. Even to-day when this use of force is less in evidence the dominant caste continues to function as a model of conduct since it is factually the most obvious example of wealth and prestige which lower castes have in day to day contacts. We have spoken of the dominant caste as at once controlling the local Brahmans dependent upon it and at the same time controlled by them as representatives of yet higher possibilities of conduct. There is no question here of ritual and secular values of the same order. The dominant caste is consciously subject to Brahmanic axioms but once the latter have been accepted and the Brahmans have been "fed", the less conscious royal model comes into play.

In this sense the dominant caste and the local Brahmans stand together as models for the qualified imitation of lower castes. Yet in one important respect the two are sociologically opposed. The superior wealth of the dominant caste, its higher standard of living, make it a model in secular matters unaffected or only slightly affected by ritual considerations. Following the idea of Hocart it seems convenient to speak of the dominant caste in this aspect as the Kingly model as opposed to the Brahmanic model which is provided by both the dominant and Brahman castes or by the Brahmans alone. Style in dress or entertainment, house architecture, house furniture and arrangement, education or the lack of it, and, in the past, martial prowess, such are the matters in which the dominant caste provides the model. In this way we account for the presence of so many Muslim and later English features in the most othodox Hindu homes. Such elements where they are "new" or incongruous derive from what is the pre-eminent model of secular power – the King or Government whatever that may be.

It is, we believe, helpful to distinguish imitation of the Kingly model in the local hierarchy from that process of modernisation which all of us refer to more frequently than we analyse. Modernisation, the introduction of Western culture elements, seems all over the world to start at any level of society or to affect all levels simultaneously; imitation of the Kingly model, on the other hand, begins at the top of the hierarchy and the new elements spread downward. Professor Srinivas in his article draws our attention to the complicated relations between the poor Brahman priest and the rich peasant headman, "the Brahman being aware of the secular power of the headman, and the headman showing deference to the Brahman's ritual position". This is the classical relation between ritual authority and secular power where they are represented by separate castes. Srinivas goes on to point out the new "Western"

element represented by the Untouchable official to whom the same peasant "shows respect, although grudgingly". "Westernisation" or modernisation is characteristically a levelling process.

Relevant material on this point is provided in a summary, written by the editor, of various field reports by B. S. Cohn, entitled *The Changing Status of a Depressed Caste*. There Cohn discusses the conscious attempts made by the low caste *Camārs* of U.P. to raise their status in the local hierarchy and to combat the political dominance of the *Ṭhākur*, a Rajput caste whose villages are organised on a lineage basis in accordance with the *Jāṭ* complex. Dr. Cohn notes that almost all attempts along "Western" lines to rise *Camār* political status have fallen down, one way or the other, because the basic fact upon which *Ṭhākur* dominance has been based for centuries remains unchanged. The land is still effectively in *Ṭhākur* hands and all *Camār* efforts to employ democratic formulae or legal proceedings inevitably come up against the superior economic power of the dominant caste. Cohn points to the "great loss by attrition" caused to the *Camār* in these expensive struggles. In democratic elections the *Ṭhākurs* of the village described were able to make the whole proceedings a farce by withholding their votes and allowing their low caste rivals to take the formal power while waiting quietly to see how effectively they could wield it without the support of wealth or traditional respect. But the *Camār* of Cohn's Madhopur have also made attempts to raise their ritual status. They have eliminated blood-sacrifice and bride-price and they have brahmanised their marriage, encouraged early marriage and tried to bring their family organisation into accordance with the strict, orthodox ideal. But, as Cohn tells us, while the *Camār* wife is being put into seclusion in the orthodox manner, the wife of the *Ṭhākur* is coming out into the world. This is a general feature in Madhopur, for it appears that at every point where the *Camār* have tried to meet the *Ṭhākur* in ritual observance or Hindu social orthodoxy, the *Ṭhākur* have already relinquished the position. The *Ṭhākur* now marry later and:

> While the *Camārs* are becoming stricter about their habits of diet, dress and occupation, the higher castes are becoming less strict. *Camārs* have become very sensitive about such matters as accepting food from castes whom they consider to be their inferiors, while at the same time some of the *Ṭhākurs* are relaxing their conformity to commensal prohibitions.

Cohn tells us that fifteen years ago a slightly less inferior caste, the *Noniyā*, attempted to take on the sacred-thread but were met with violent repressive action by the *Ṭhākurs*, yet ten years later they again took on the sacred-thread with impunity. In this case the *Ṭhākurs* change in attitude can only mean that they have ceased to attach the same importance to a symbol of presige that they have attached formerly, it does not mean that they now admit the *Noniyā* claim to the relative

ritual purity which wearing of the sacred-thread implies. The *Ṭhākur* have shifted their emphasis and now apparently base their superiority on "progressive" rather than on orthodox behaviour. Faced with imitation by a lower caste the members of that higher caste can repress that imitation by force or they can repudiate the imitated custom or cease to stress it in their own claims to superiority. Anyone with experience of Indian peasant society will have had occasion to remark how, in the course of time, symbols of prestige proceed down the social scale and cease to be apparent or emphasised at the highest levels. Mere imitation, however, without some other economic or political factor brings about no change in the relative position of castes. In this connection Cohn observes

> As for inspiring greater respect from the higher castes such changes of caste behaviour receive at best passive recognition, certainly not approval. The gain to the *Camārs* from these changes has been chiefly a gain in the vital dimension of self-respect.

The phrase "self-respect" here gives us a clue to the social corollary of imitation. While it appears that as regards any attempt to raise their status in relation to the *Ṭhākur*, the *Camār* have met with limited success, there is another side to the affair. The *Camār* of Madhopur measure their self-respect not merely in terms of the higher but also of the lower. Imitation and repudiation are the related appearances of one and the same process in the caste system. The *Camār* have stopped eating beef and with the "grudging acquiescence" of the *Ṭhākurs* have cut their traditional association with cattle dung as fuel and manure. This local group of *Camār*, and Cohn stresses the fact that it is a local group, which initiates such changes finally severs its marital connections with other groups that do not follow its lead.

> Ultimately, the initiating *Camārs* determine that they will no longer give daughters to or accept daughters-in-law from *Camārs* who do not conform to the change.

Such are the developments which lead to the formation of a new caste. In the course of time the unreformed sections may come to admit the superiority of the new group and yet higher castes may come to distinguish the latter favourably from its associates as in the case of the untouchable *Bhar* of whom Cohn reports

> They are still regarded as "untouchable", although they are held in better regard than the *Khaṭīks* and *Pāsīs* of the area, who still herd swine.

Imitation and repudiation of custom in fact work at every level of the hierarchy with an increasing intensity of significance for the acting group or caste whatever it may be. We may define an all-India Brahmanic model and the correlative all-India notions of unrespectable and impure

behaviour; these are in a sense mediated by the local representatives – Brahmans and Untouchables, but in the final analysis it is the condition of the castes immediately above and immediately below any given caste which define its position. Despite the emphasis of *Ṭhākur* prestige the *Camār* are primarily concerned to assert their status *vis à vis* other Untouchables, both those below them and those which before were considered slightly superior to them.

In Cohn's description of the *Ṭhākurs*' indifference to those very aspects of social life which the *Camār* are most concerned to stress we may see that the situation is the result of various factors one of which is the opposition of the secular to the ritual model which we have already noted. The political power of the *Ṭhākurs* to repress has in great measure decreased and they can now only maintain their position by repudiating the imitated customs. But the same changes which have taken away their power have also brought them a wider field in which to express superiority. The growing self-consciousness of Hinduism which has made it in the last hundred and fifty years a world religion has provided a ground in religion itself for repudiation of older Brahmanic orthodoxy. In many parts of India today widow-remarriage is being practised in higher castes and the reaction of lower castes or even of the lower levels of the same caste is remarkable. They may condone it or even admire it as progressive or be indifferent to it as irrelevant to their own concerns, but whatever their reaction they are not in any way prevented from condemning it when it is practised by yet *lower* castes or from making every endeavour to eliminate it from their own body of custom. If we look only at the elements or contents of behaviour we are likely to be confused by paradox but if we look below this behaviour we see that the structure is preserved. An example may also be taken from Marriott's article. He reports that nowadays for the annual ceremony when sisters tie charms on their brothers' wrists, instead of the charms made formally by the Brahmans, factory made charms are used and these are "hawked in the village by a local caste group of *Jogīs*... The new string charms are also more convenient for mailing in letters to distant, city-dwelling brothers whom sisters cannot visit on the auspicious day." He adds that Beals (in a personal communication) informed him that in the village of Namhalli brothers "tuned in to All India Radio in order to receive a time signal at the astrological moment, and then tied such charms to their own wrists, with an accompaniment of broadcast Sanskrit *mantras*." Such changes of behaviour are not of structural significance and in their culturally levelling effect appear to be an aspect of Westernisation as opposed to the structurally significant behaviour of the *Ṭhākurs* and *Camārs* in Cohn's village. Paradoxically what appears at first sight to be "westernised" behaviour among the *Ṭhākurs* can best be understood when referred to an indigenous structural process

while the apparently "religious" behaviour in Kishan Garhi and Namhalli is the product of external and secular influences.

Truly structural changes are rarely observed and are unlikely to be observed even in the course of a whole life-time. But the studies in this volume present a few examples which allow us to speculate upon future possibilities. We have stressed the importance of the dominant caste as the key-stone of the local hierarchy. Consequently it is changes which affect the dominant caste most fundamentally which are likely to bring about structural changes in the future. There are two kinds of dominant caste and the reactions upon them of modern conditions may appear to be characteristically different. The two kinds are the Brahman as dominant and the secular dominant caste. The best discussion of the former is Dr. Gough's *Social Structure of a Tanjore Village*. In the village of Kumbapettai which she describes, the dominant caste (although only the second largest) is a Brahman caste occupying thirty-six out of the forty-eight houses in the Brahman centre of the village.

> Until about twenty years ago Brahman families living in the village owned all the village lands and held economic control over their tenants... Forty years ago, all Non-Brahmans of Kumbapettai were either tenants of Brahmans or specialised village servants working for Brahmans and each other.

Two-thirds of the village land was held directly by Brahman landlords and cultivated by low caste *Paḷḷaṉs*, high-grade Untouchables. One third of the village land was held on a share-cropping tenure by the *Kōṉaṉ*, the next largest caste after the Brahmans apart from the *Paḷḷaṉ* who outnumber both. Dr. Gough describes the *Kōṉaṉ* as the "dominant Non-Brahman caste of the village", using the word dominant to signify size and this is perhaps a confusing usage. There is no evidence that the *Kōṉaṉ* offered a secular counter-balance to Brahman ritual power but, on the contrary, the *Kōṉaṉ* with other non-Brahman castes were subject to both Brahman ritual and political power. The account of the rights and powers of the Brahmans of Kumbapettai is almost identical to that of the *Okkaliga* of Mysore described by Srinivas.

There have been important economic changes in Kumbapettai in the last twenty years. Impoverished Brahmans have sold land to outsiders and thus created an absentee landlord group with no traditional tie to the village. The result of this is that some non-Brahman farmers are now able to rent land from these outsiders and so emancipate themselves from the economic control of the Brahmans. Both Brahmans and non-Brahmans in Kumbapettai have turned their interest to other sources of cash income both inside and outside the village, in any case tending towards greater independence.

Among Adi Dravidas (a comprehensive political title which includes

the bulk of the Untouchable castes) great changes have taken place. Only 22 per cent now work as tied labourers for payment in kind. One family now owns one acre of land, 38 per cent have in the last ten years become share croppers on the same terms as the Non-Brahmans, while 39 per cent work as daily coolies for whoever – Brahman, Non-Brahman or outsider – will employ them, and receive their wages in cash. Even tied labourers, since paddy rationing was instituted in the war and labourers were subject to procurement regulations, are obliged to receive part of their payment in cash.

The Brahman reaction to these developments is significant, for they complain that with the loss of their economic power over the lower castes the latter are not so "loyal" as they were before and the "unity" of the village is endangered. These remarks taken together with the picture given of earlier inter-village fights when rival Brahman landlords in different villages marshalled their tenants against each other is sufficient confirmation of what we have already had to say on the subject of "village solidarity".

The effect of this breakdown of power in Tanjore suggests a pattern which may be found elsewhere. Lower castes divided up into different villages and divided by the conflicts within the dominant caste in those villages, now appear to be rediscovering a sense of unity which, in Tanjore, is associated with southern anti-Brahman Dravidian movement. It is however possible that the fact that the dominant caste is in this case Brahman makes for certain differences. Speaking of the large temple festivals which became open to Adi Dravidas after the Temple Entry Act of 1947, Dr. Gough says:

Even these festivals, however, are now losing their appeal for the lower castes, among whom they are associated with the supremacy of the Brahmans and with religious doctrines in which they no longer have faith.

This reaction is in fact dual, it is against the dominant caste as a political power and against Brahmanism because of its association with dominance. We are told that the Brahmans are for the most part voters for the Congress Party while the Adi Dravidas are increasingly influenced by Communism. Imitation of any superior custom – religious or secular – in these circumstances is an admission of inferiority incompatible with the political aspirations of the lower castes. Elsewhere, in Cohn's village, for example, the structural superiority of the Brahmans is left unimpaired by the economic and political quarrels between *Ṭhākur* and *Camār*. In Kumbapettai Brahmanic prestige is insolubly tied to secular power and conflict over the latter inevitably brings the former into play, to be vindicated or lost. We are bound to be tentative in discussing so complex a matter but it would seem that the presence of a dominant Brahman caste is most suited to bring about "the emergence of a new, low class of unbelievers who pin their faith... to rebellious political

action." It would seem on the face of it that such economic changes elsewhere in India, where dominant castes are not also Brahman, would be accompanied by less conflict as a rise in economic status may be invested in Brahmanic status by the adoption of customs not previously contaminated by antagonism. In Kumbapettai, Dr. Gough tells us, two children, significantly children of economically independent fathers, "walk deliberately in their shoes down the Brahman street to post letters in the mail-box". For these children, and for others like them, an affirmation of independence is, in these circumstances, also a violation of the regulations preserving caste purity.

These new facts mentioned by almost all modern observers – the emergence of cash economy, the emergence of the independent wage earner and the decline of the power of the dominant caste, the spread of Western ideas in traditional guise and the spread of traditional ideas by modern methods – will undoubtedly produce structural changes in the course of time but they will only be understood by structural analysis, not by the proliferation of descriptive terminology.

In this connection we cannot conceal the fact that there is a major difference in emphasis between ourselves and the editor of this volume at least so far as the latter sections of his own contribution are concerned. In his discussion of religion in Kishan Garhi he is concerned to describe how elements of the great tradition of Hinduism enter the parochial life of the village and are vulgarised there while, at the same time, elements of the strictly local religion come, in the course of time, to assume a new dignity and to be incorporated in the greater tradition. He emphasises the interdependence of the great and the little traditions in the most satisfactory manner:

> Both little communities and greater communities are mutually necessary conditions of each other's existence in their present forms. One must consider both in order to thoroughly understand either.

But we cannot avoid seeing that such a discussion is limited only to elements of religion and is not concerned with the relations between these elements, is not concerned with the structure of religious life. Our criticism can only appear to be a negative one since the necessary facts for the desired analysis are not at our disposal and the presentation from the one point of view of the author precludes a new approach.[8] What, however, is most striking from Dr. Marriott's account is the apparent indifference of his villagers to the kind of conclusion which he strives to establish. More, they are even indifferent to their own explanations of the festivals, gods and observances which go together to make up their religious life. They are indifferent, we are told, to the origins of the various elements:

[8] We hope to discuss religion in a subsequent number.

Whatever the processes that lie behind the present combination of great and little traditions in the religion of Kishan Garhi, villagers now regard both as old and indigenous.

Indeed, we might say, for them there are not two traditions but simply the one which is their life. This, we know, will not be acceptable to our author, for, after discussing the strictly local elements to be found in the celebration of all-India festivals such as *Dīvālī* he says:

A part of village religion thus remains conceptually separable, both for the people who live in Kishan Garhi and for the outside analyst.

That a part of village religion is not conceptually separable for the villagers, at least not in the same way as for the observer, is surely apparent from the immediately preceding quotation.

Marriott gives us several instances of the people's indifference to their own explanations. A good example is the various accounts given of the Car Festival *(Ratha Yātrā)* in a nearby town.

I found that different villagers held very diverse explanations of the festival. When they saw the focal idol being towed through the streets on a great car with swordplay, hymn singing, and roll of drums, some said it represented the Goddes *(Devī)*, others that it represented *Ṭhākurjī* riding triumphant after victory, others that it represented the divine epic couple *Sītā-Rām*, and still others that it represented *Kṛṣṇa* celebrating his birthday.

We speak of indifference but we have to remind ourselves that this is only an indifference to what appears significant to Western eyes and it teaches us to look elsewhere. People are not naive in their religious behaviour and if there is no significance in the elements and appearances it may lie elsewhere, in the relations of a structural world.

Two papers in the present volume which we have not mentioned so far may be touched upon in closing, for in their different ways they demonstrate in a general manner the needs that we have stressed in this account. They are Professor Mandelbaum's *The World and the World View of the Kota* and Miss Steed's *Notes to an Approach to a Study of Personality Formation in a Hindu Village in Gujarat*. Professor Mandelbaum opens his paper with a definition of "world view".

The world view of a people is their characteristic outlook. It is the inside view, the ways in which a person of the group typically sees himself in relation to his world. It includes his mapping of that world, that is to say, the categories he uses in his perception of the familiar and of the strange. It includes the emphasis he places upon what he sees, the choices he makes from among the alternatives he knows.

Professor Mandelbaum has made a pioneer study carefully limited to a small group of people but for Indian sociologists to ponder his definition is to realise their unpreparedness to approach such questions as yet.

We have only to remind ourselves of the work done in recent years upon African kinship, law, religion and cosmologies to recognize that we have some way to go before we can approach the goal which Professor Mandelbaum sets before us. Similarly, while noting the modesty of Miss Steed's title, we would question the possibility, at the present, of making precisely the kind of study which she sets out to make. We do not rule out the validity of certain psychological approaches to alien material but, pre-eminently, the study of personality formation lies beyond the scope of the subject as it now is. She discusses for instance a Rajput in her village and reproduces an interview with him to demonstrate his tendency "to dissociate his private from his public attitudes". Then again she speaks of his esteem for "the practice of religious bachelorhood *(brahmacarya)* which he did not in fact practice. To what extent these are truly personal idiosyncrasies and to what extent they are aspects of the acceptable social *persona* of Hindu tradition, we do not think it is possible to say before much more purely sociological work has been done. An example of the kind of ground work we desiderate comes to mind at Miss Steed's translation of many terms about each of which a full length article might well be written. It is striking, for instance, that the adjective *ṭhaṇḍu* (cold, as water is cold) which is variously translated as reticent, silent, quiet and indifferent, is nowhere mentioned as a desirable quality in a man likely to be ascribed by his mother and even claimed by himself.

We make no apology for having insisted at such length upon some elementary facts of Indian social life, for we think that some basic agreement as to the nature of the facts we study is essential if Indian sociology is to develop. The distinguished editors of the series in which this volume appears write in their *Foreword*:

> In the following pages it is not asked, "What does this say about India?" but rather, "What does this say about the interests and way of work of the anthropologist who wrote this paper: what did he try to find out and how did he go about it?"

Such questions are valid and yet if the suggestion is that interest is separate from method and both are undetermined by the material to be studied, we cannot agree. For us it seems most necessary at the present time to assert first of all that the sociological perspective is distinct and as objective in India as elsewhere, and secondly that the nature of Indian society involves certain shifts and adjustments of that perspective which, in turn, will profit the science of sociology as a whole.

KINSHIP

Dr. IRAWATI KARVÉ, **Kinship Organisation in India** (*Poona, Deccan College Research Institute, 1953). xiv, 304 p. (Deccan College Monograph Series, N° 11).*

In the present state of knowledge, to write a book on Kinship in India is a daring venture. One would think that, for a general picture to be attempted, a number of intensive studies should first be written, and, apart from tribal monographs, we have very few of them indeed. Only the personality of Mrs. Karvé made the enterprise look a little less unreasonable. Her scholarly background, her direct knowledge of many Indian communities and insight in things Indian, her impressive energy and character, and her keen desire to master by understanding the large amount of data present in her mind made one think that after all she might manage it. Of course one should not expect a definitive picture, but such a person might break a short-cut in the jungle and build, from a body of well-established and well-chosen data, a few generalizations which would stimulate and orientate research for years to come.

The book does not altogether justify these hopes. Still, a considerable amount of material, for a large part new, has been brought together. We are given lists of kinship terms in the main Indian languages, the linguistic content of which is carefully studied, and notes on the corresponding attitudes. At the same time other aspects of kinship are investigated, although not equally in the different regions. In particular, marriage regulations are treated in detail, and certain aspects of the joint family are put into relief, especially the situation of the woman in the joint family of her husband. Texts belonging to the different literatures, and folklore are taken into account.

Unfortunately, there seems to be a great disproportion between this array of data and the use to which it is put. The conclusions reached are disappointing. But leaving this on a side, there is one more disconcerting feature. As soon as one ceases to look at this book as a personal record of experience and erudition, as soon as one wants to assess, on the factual side, each development, each item as a contribution

to knowledge, one comes to realize that even the presentation, the formulation of the material does not afford entire satisfaction. No doubt the first reason for this lies in the wide scope of the work, but there are other reasons also, into which we shall have to inquire.

For this is, partly at least, even in the author's intention, a sociological book. It deserves serious and lengthy consideration. We should learn as much from its shortcomings as from its positive contributions. It should be clear from the start that while trying to do this, and to assess, from our point of view, the place of the work under review in the progress of these studies, we cannot possibly at the same time do full justice to the author, whose approach is, as we shall see, somewhat different from our own. Many valuable remarks and minute observations will have to remain unnoticed for the broad lines to be carefully investigated.

Before summarizing the main developments, it is advisable to clear the ground by presenting a general criticism of the methods. This will bear on two aspects: the means of information on the one hand, the general conception of kinship and the treatment of the evidence on the other.

Being a Brahman lady from the Marathi speaking country, the author has a very intimate knowledge of kinship among her own people and among other castes in the same country, and has thought a good deal about it. Indeed she shows how in this country two different kinship patterns, northern and southern, come to face each other and merge to some extent, and it is not improbable that this very circumstance prompted her to compare the two patterns, and try and understand in what the difference between them consists. This purpose corresponds, as we shall see, to one of the major themes of the book.

Starting from this, the author obviously thought that it was not necessary for her to stay for long among people in other parts of India and make an intensive study of them – as any social anthropologist nowadays would do – in order to understand their kinship organisation. Partly, one can imagine, from conceptions of more easy-going times in anthropology (when Rivers, for instance, collected within one day a terminology in a Melanesian island), partly from self-assurance rooted in birthright and intellectual training, Mrs. Karvé supposed that, by virtue of her knowledge of one region, it would be sufficient for her to make elsewhere brief inquiries or soundings to get a basis for comparison. And she tells how she did this, indefatigably, in the course of another and not less exacting study (p. 16–18).

Now, this assumption is worth looking into. In our view, it might be justified if one was concerned only with variants of one and the same system all over the country. But the author postulates that different regions have actually different systems. Then, is there not a contradiction between this postulate and the method? No anthropologist at present would claim that to be born in one kinship system enables him to

understand another without bothering to study it intensively. No English anthropologist would dream of writing of European kinship from his immediate knowledge of kinship in Britain and brief inquiries elsewhere. Then, even about Maharashtra, one comes to regret very much that Mrs. Karvé has not gone into a scientific analysis of what she knows. It is a great pity that she has not given, to begin with, a monograph on kinship there. As she did not do it, all her immediate knowledge of the area is not the equivalent of an intensive study, which could be used as a pivot for comparison.

This brings us to the second point: writing up an intensive study forces the student of kinship to test the conceptions put forward by previous authors in the light of his own material and experience, in brief it forces him to think about what kinship is in order to describe it properly. Only in this process can relevant abstract categories emerge which no immediate knowledge can deliver. The subject is no doubt very difficult, there is little agreement on some basic issues, even in the terminology, and everyone can find, in books written by trained anthropologists, reasons for dissatisfaction in this respect. Still the lack of a clear all-out conception is less dangerous in a monograph where the data are set out with some detail than in a comparative work as the one before us. Our author sets out to summarize a number of different kinship systems, or rather to classify a considerable diversity into a few different systems in such a way that these may be compared. Clearly this cannot be done unless one has some idea about what kinship essentially is, for then only will one be able to reduce the concrete phenomena into some sort of intellectual model which can be compared with another. Undoubtedly the author, although she does not state them systematically, has some conceptions on this point, as for instance that kinship terminology as well as kinship attitudes, marriage regulations, type of family, etc. should be taken into account. But no attempt is made to state the interrelations between these features, with the result that either they are compared in isolation or the author is carried away by intuitive associations between them.

Together with the absence of any reflection about the nature, the boundaries, the major articulations of kinship, the avoidance of the expression "kinship system", widely prevalent as it is, is characteristic. It looks as if the author had refused to consider the assumptions implied in the word "system" and, being satisfied that she knew sufficiently what kinship is, had preferred the older but vaguer expression "kinship organisation". In general, conceptual lack of precision seems to be due for a part to the author's incomplete conversion to social anthropology. She is an ethnologist and a physical anthropologist as well, and many passages show a shift from sociological to historico-cultural, and even racial, considerations. She is certainly aware of recent developments,

but she appears to take here and there what suits her, without much selection or sense for incompatibilities. Neither are most of the terms used defined, nor are we referred to previous literature for their definition. Old influences are present side by side with modern ones, all mostly unnoticed. Of these for instance two are certainly found without the authors being mentioned (Radcliffe-Brown and Lévi-Strauss). On the factual side also, no effort is made, in general, to trace the history of the subject and discuss, or even recall, previous views. There are a few references but no bibliography is provided. On the whole the book is highly personal, as if Mrs. Karvé had developed her ideas in isolation. But, alas, we cannot accept uncritically what even the best informed person has to say.

Combining sociology and historical culturology results here in confounding diachronic and synchronic approaches. This is certainly a complicated question: one would not deny that there can be a diachronic understanding, nor even that in certain cases past evidence can be used for choosing between two conflicting interpretations of present-day evidence (this seems to be the point on p. 19). As sociologists, we want to develop first of all the synchronic approach, which allows for a particular tyoe of analysis, and indeed Mrs. Karvé often seems to initiate such a course. The trouble is that more often than not she turns short into diachronic considerations. Indeed, reading several pages in the Introduction where she wants to justify the use of literary evidence, one comes to the conclusion that the only type of understanding she conceives of is a diachronic one.

> (after coming home) ... a study of some literature would be undertaken to find out how far the literature reflected the kinship attitudes. These studies were very rewarding. They (...) helped to interpret certain facts which had seemed obscure to me. (...) how necessary these studies are to understand present attitudes (p. 18–19).
>
> The ideas of status, duties and rights of members of the joint family are those inherited from and deeply rooted in the traditions of these Epics. It would indeed be a pity if an alleged anti-historical bias in anthropological studies were to blind us to this valuable record of *a past which gives meaning to present conduct and thought* (p. 21). (The italics are ours.)
>
> I myself started my enquiry as a field-worker and turned to the written records only when I could not understand some of the data I had collected and found that the written literature helped me to understand my field-notes (p. 22).

We should certainly not minimize such a close relevance of literature as the last quotation indicates (although the statement appears highly subjective, and the examples quoted are by no means so decisive). Moreover it would appear from the same quotation that literature was used in this case as a substitute for a long stay in the field.

Anyhow the particular bias of our author is expressed in the words we have underlined. We cannot here engage in a discussion on "meaning". But this is not all. Even if one agrees on the relevance of evidence taken from past literatures, the whole question is the way it should be used. Generally speaking, texts will not answer all the sorts of questions a trained anthropologist studies, and therefore such information as they contain is best read critically in the light of analysis of present-day happenings. At least this is the proper anthropological attitude, as opposed to the philological. On one decisive occasion our author takes the opposite view: she chooses to study north-Indian kinship first in the past, and the book actually opens with a chapter dealing with the Epics. Then, in the second chapter, she turns to the present, while still occasionally referring the reader to the past for understanding. Whatever the merits of the first chapter in itself, the procedure is rather strange. Is this historical method, or even, one is inevitably tempted to ask, hindu, brahmanical method? The texts speak only of Brahmans and Kshatriyas, and one result of the method is that northern kinship is equated, throughout these two chapters, with kinship among the upper castes.

In one thing the book clearly and surprisingly falls short of modern requirements: proper localisation is often lacking. This is connected with two features already noticed: extensive study, and diachronical bias. This at least is what appears at first sight. The reader regrets to find it difficult to assess one given statement because he is not told in what caste or in what place this or that happens. He fears that this may prove ominous for the future destiny of the book, as one is not given the means to check the basis on which many rapid generalizations rest. If these generalizations were to be rejected for other reasons, then the description itself could not be used, that is the material collected would have to be collected a second time. The matter stands a little differently if one considers the author's intention. First, the characteristic we deplore is linked with the personal character of the work: the author seems unwilling to bring forth a factual basis which could survive the possible rejection of her theses: the theses are the main thing, and the rest is there rather as illustration. Now the insufficient localisation springs from the very plan and conception of the work: the author attempts to give a *regional description* of kinship. She does not ponder on the difficulties of this task, she assumes that she is able to do it. It is only natural that, apart from her native region, the picture is a mosaic of items taken from one group or another, and which proper localisation would ruin. The sociologist is at liberty to repeat that he would rather have a few complete pictures of well-defined and localised groups. The author is surely not unaware of such requirements, but here she appears to have disregarded them. It is almost useless to insist that in such circumstances only a precise analysis in one case, delivering clear concepts

for comparison, could warrant the procedure chosen. Here again we are drawn back from sociology to culturology, but this time it is the result of a deliberate choice.

The looseness of the vocabulary needs to be stressed. Examples will be found below. In this place we shall consider only the use of the term "family". In the Introduction, we are told that "by family is meant the joint family here" (p. 10). Then, we read in the first chapter, following a detailed consideration of kinship terms in sanskrit:

> We have now to understand the structure of the ancient Hindu family in which these terms were used for different kinds of relatives. The family of birth and the family of marriage can best be defined by describing and naming actual marriages and references to sexual unions in the literature. Towards this end it is best to know what types of marriages are recorded and the kin-group living under one roof (p. 44).

If it was found alone, the expression "kin-group living under one roof" would lead one to believe that the author has in view the domestic family. But the word must be taken also in a different sense, since it is assumed that (all) sanskrit kinship terms are used *within* "the ancient Hindu family". "Family" seems to stand here for "kinship". Now, what is meant by "family of birth" and "family of marriage"? Given patrilocality and the joint family, the domestic groups in which one is born and in which one lives after marriage are different only for a female Ego. But according to the context it may well be that the author has in mind something different, namely the kinship ties given at birth and those which appear with one's marriage. This view will be strengthened by looking at another passage. Let us note here only the confusion between two uses of the same word, and the surprising occurrence of "family" in the vaguest sense, in a sense rightly discarded by social anthropologists. Further, we find this:

> The words *kula*, *vaṁśa* and *gotra* were used for a family in Sanskrit, a person naming his own *kula*, *vaṁśa* or *gotra* always mentioned his patri-family (...) The *vaṁśa* is an enumeration of descent in a patrilineal manner (p. 48).
>
> [in certain contexts] the two words *kula* and *vaṁśa* seem identical (...) *Kula* on the other hand in its narrower meaning seems to refer to the whole of the patri-family residing at one place. *Kula* is thus the aggregate of kin in a great family (p. 50).

We see here that *kula* and *vaṁśa* are related to patrilineal descent; *kula* in particular is defined as what might be called a local descent group. But at the same time our author insists in retaining in this context the expression "family", even to the extent of speaking of a "patri-family", for a patrilineal descent group. Further when we are told (p. 63) that "The southern Brahmins (...) completed the change of orientation for marriage from a bilateral family to a unilateral exogamous patri-clan", what is meant is simply that they changed from

cognatic prohibitions of marriage to clan exogamy. "Bilateral family" stands here for "cognatic relatives".

After all this, one may wonder at the possible meaning of a statement like: "[In the south] the family is composed of similar categories of kin as in the north" (p. 181). It might well mean that the kinship system is the same, but this is not what is intended. We are dealing here with the fact that the same type of joint family prevails in both parts. On the other hand, no wonder that we come to such strange questions as: "whether clans are not enlarged families as is the case in northern India" (p. 186), aggravated by an affirmative foot-note "On this view the family, 'primary' or 'extended', becomes the fundamental social unit and [the] 'clan' a secondary and a derivative formation;" (p. 186, n. 6). It must be said at once that this last is an exceptional case, but if one were to ask how it is that a person of such knowledge as Mrs. Karvé comes to such extremities, the answer is that anybody who neglects to ponder on definitions and the proper conceptualisation of the data will encounter the same pitfalls.

To conclude our discussion of the family, one attempt at definition has to be quoted; but it is an unfortunate one (p. 221):

> In the northern zone ego's parents, the brothers and sisters of parents, the spouses and children of these, ego's brothers and sisters and the children of these and of ego constitute a very large *group* of relatives, none of whom can be marriage mates to the ego or to ego's children. This whole *group* may be termed 'the extended family of birth'. In addition to these, he will also have a very large number of relatives who will be the blood relations of his own spouse or of the spouses of his brothers and sisters or the spouses of his children. This may be termed the extended family of marriage.

We have italicised the word *group*, because it embodies an arbitrary assumption which leads naturally, as a second step, to calling the same collection of persons a "family". Actually these people do not in any way constitute a group, except from the writer's point of view: it is simply that one cannot marry among them. Not being a family, they cannot be an "extended" family any more than a "primary" family. They are only a collection of cognatic relatives.

The next paragraph is also illuminating from the point of view of method. To summarize, if we constitute a similar "extended family of birth" in the southern zone, we shall find in it persons who can intermarry. Conclusion: there is no distinction in the south between "extended family of birth" and "extended family of marriage", they are identical. But what does this mean, we may ask, except that it is not profitable to "group" people according to other people's principles? This is pre-sociological, it is equivalent to speaking of "brother" or "maternal uncle" as of something objective when they are only categories of the people studied, it is a confusion of biology and sociology. Com-

parison is not possible in terms of one system or the other. Comparison is only possible between the principles on which the different systems rest, and to discover these principles, we must be able to look at each system as a whole without prematurely comparing it to another.

Before entering into the different chapters of the book, something general can also be said about the treatment of kinship terminologies, which occupy a relatively large space in each chapter. As already said, long lists of terms are given for all the main languages in each area, and each term is scrutinized mainly but not exclusively from a linguistic point of view. Some might think that this is not essential to a study of kinship. We take a different view, but we should recognize at the same time that linguistic and sociological analysis are two different things. These Mrs. Karvé does not distinguish, with the result that, except for the southern zone (see below) what she says is rarely of immediate relevance for a synchronic study.

The lists of kinship terms, taken independently of the analysis, as detailed factual material as well as possible basis for analysis, suffer from one defect already mentioned, namely the lack of localisation. This represents a step back when compared to lists as old as Morgan's for Dravidian languages (the caste was not indicated, but the lists were roughly located). Mrs. Karvé has tended to give, not samples of terminological *sets of terms* as used in specified groups, but a sort of dictionary in which, for a given language, a number of equivalent terms may appear for the same relative. This makes impossible any structural study, as one does not know if those equivalents are used by one given group, and which term for, say, father, goes with which term for, say, uncle. This is a pity. It is an example of how valuable information can be sterilized for the use of future research by an imprecise formulation.

To conclude with this point, we agree that there are in some way regional patterns, but they are not intelligible except as exemplified in specified groups. Once features are torn out of this their particular sociological context and lumped together within one cultural or linguistic "zone", the culturologist may feel at ease but the sociologist is at a loss.

Let us now take one by one the different zones our author distinguishes in the successive chapters: she begins with the northern zone (ch. I and II), then follow the central (ch. III), the southern (ch. IV and V), and the eastern zone (ch. VI). We shall confine ourselves to some salient features of the first three zones and to the general argument concerning them.

These zones can be distinguished by saying that the southern corresponds to the area of Dravidian languages, the eastern to Austro-Asiatic languages, while the Indo-Aryan languages are split between the northern and the central zones, the latter, a zone of transition between north and

south, comprising roughly the areas of Gujarati, Rajasthani, Marathi, Oriya, plus Vindhya Pradesh (Hindi speaking).

The northern zone comprises the areas of the following languages: Sindhi, Panjabi, Hindi (and Pahari), Bihari, Bengali, Assami and Nepali. Avowingly not much is said about the particularities of the eastern part of the zone.

Apart from terminology, the description of contemporary kinship in the northern zone takes about twenty pages (p. 314–336). More than half of this development is devoted to marriage rules, and on this it is possible to make a few comments. Before giving genealogical examples from four higher castes, apparently from the western parts of the area (not explicitly localised) and without any discussion of or reference to previous attempts by other writers,[1] the author presents us with her own generalization about marriage prohibitions. It is this:

> The actual rule of marriage is however that a person (1) must not marry in his patri-family which can be called the patri-clan in some cases and (2) must also avoid marriage (a) with the children of his mother's siblings and cousins and (b) with the children of his father's sisters and the children of his father's female cousins ... In almost all castes in the northern zone the marriage of cousins (removed even by two or three degrees) is viewed as an incestuous union.
>
> The rule is elaborated in different ways in different communities. (p. 117).

To criticize this in detail would lead us too far. We must be content with making one single point. One imprecision in the above appears immediately, it is about the word "cousins": in particular, we are not told whether it means cousins of all descriptions, or only parallel cousins in the father's line. All examples quoted by Mrs. Karvé further on would show that it is the second sense, the more restricted, which fits. There, in effect, the prohibition in question bears on people belonging to the "gotra", i.e. to the patrilineal group, of a particular relative, so that only patrilineal parallel cousins are equivalent from the point of view of the prohibition. Even in the most extreme cases, the children of the mother's or father's *female* cousins do not appear to be barred. How is it then that the general rule does not take this into account? The answer to this we find in two sentences which actually belong to the above quoted passage (they fill in the interruption marked by points: ...).

> This rule is the same as the one which was in vogue in ancient northern India. A person must not marry in his patri-family and must avoid marriage with the Sapinda-kin.

The clue lies in the word "sapinda", which is inconsistent with distinguishing different sorts of cousins. The modern prohibitions, as exemplified,

[1] For instance E. A. M. Blunt (*The Caste System of Northern India*, p. 509) has summarized the different sorts of rules found in U.P.

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are (for a part) expressed in terms of exogamous groups, while the rule of sapinda bears "bilaterally". No common denominator could be found between them, unless the meaning of "cousins" was left ambiguous. But surely the anthropologist cannot agree to treating the present data in such a way for the sake of reconciling them with an alleged ancient pattern. The "actual rule" quoted above is not the actual rule, it is a transition between ancient and modern skilfully devised, in the face of the greatest difficulties, to derive the latter from the former. We shall return to the largely imaginary conflict which our author senses between two kinds of marriage prohibition. The tendency to reduce one to the other is also apparent in a formula found in the same passage. As a matter of fact, all examples quoted show patrilineal exogamy (and the consideration of lower castes would not but strengthen the case). Unless we know that, in the author's view, this should be minimized, what sense can we give to the statement: "a person must not marry in his patri-family which can be called the patri-clan in some cases"? (Incidentally, "patri-clan" is not taken here in the sense of "patrilineal clan", but of the father's clan; this results from the use of "matri-clan" in the same page to denote the (patrilineal) clan of the mother; but then, what does the "patri-family" mean?)

The author proceeds to show how the "rule is elaborated in different ways in different communities". Here some imprecision results from the use of the term "gotra". We are told about "gotras in the old Brahmanic sense of the word" (p. 117), i.e. as exogamous units, so far so good; but we read also that "sometimes a caste is divided into exogamous gotras or endogamous gotras (p. 118), as also of (Kayastha) gotras which "do not seem to have any function in marriage regulations" (p. 119). It would seem that in such cases discrimination is called for. In the last example, the "gotras" have no interest for the study of marriage regulations; we are not told what the people call their (actual) exogamous divisions, whose proper names are given, and which the author loosely calls "families". One is the more surprised that the author makes no attempt to clarify the situation, as she writes a few pages earlier (p. 115) that "There are certain castes in India whose social prestige makes other copy their institutions, at least in name". Is this not the case here? One is inclined to think that imitation goes very far in this sphere, and that the first task of the sociologist should be to disentangle the actual institutions and the aura of prestigious formulas in which they are clad.

Furthermore, we know already, from previous authors, that many people have exogamous divisions which they don't call "gotras" but by other names. Although we don't hear about them here, a generalization is nevertheless attempted and presented as reasonably certain. It is true that this is largely based on old literature, of which present-day happenings are actually little more than illustrations. In fact, more precise and com-

plete descriptions, even of the only groups from which evidence is quoted, would have been more useful. For instance, it is not impossible after all that there is a relation between the sapinda prohibition and the rule prohibiting marriage in a number of gotras. How the latter rule is applied in fact would be here a basic consideration. We read little about this, but another case is given, from the Agarwals, where the prohibition bears on the gotra on the father's side but, on the mother's side, on a smaller unit, namely the particular patrilineage to which she belongs. In this case "A person must not marry in his own gotra nor in the *jāt* (patrilineage) of his mother, of his father's sister and of his mother's sister" (p. 124). But the patrilineage of the father's sister is the same as the father's, and that of the mother's sister the same as the mother's, so that the last two conditions add nothing to the first two.

One more remark: the "rule" quoted above does not comprise all the marriage prohibitions. We read that marriage is prohibited according to the case: 1) in the local caste group, even if made up of different lineage groups, this being sometimes called "village exogamy"; 2) even and at the same time among people residing in villages whose territories touch one's own village territory (p. 118–119).

This is the conclusion:

> There are thus two opposing tendencies. The consciousness of caste status keeps marriage territorially and genealogically within a group which from older times is established as an affinal group, while the taboos on the marriage of near kin and the prescription of local exogamy tend to spread the affinal group over a comparatively large area and to include a considerable number of families within it (p. 125).

We shall take this to mean two things: first that, while considerations of status tend to restrict the area of endogamy, marriage prohibitions tend to bar marriage over a wide area, in terms of kinship as well as in terms of space. (There is nothing strikingly new about this, the author insists upon the wide area of prohibition in order to contrast this state of things with that found in South India.) A second statement seems implied in the passage, i.e. that marriage prohibitions are of two kinds: prohibitions bearing on near kin, or cognatic prohibitions, and "local exogamy". The omission of exogamy pure and simple is tendentious, as was its under-emphasis above. But to discuss fully this fundamental issue, it is necessary to turn to the previous chapter, which deals with ancient Northern India, or rather with kinship in the sanskrit Epics (chronologically at the latest in the first centuries A. D.).

According to our author, the Indo-Europeans had only one sort of prohibition, bearing on close cognatic relatives (they had no exogamy), a prohibition of the same nature as that formulated in the *sāpiṇḍya* rule. Starting from this common basis, Kshatriyas on the one hand and Brahmans on the other would have developed two different systems:

the Kshatriyas, thanks to some sort of lineage organisation, would have added to the cognatic prohibitions another rule called "local exogamy" while the Brahmans, being more mobile, were to attach exogamy to the Pravara (ancestor's name) and, since Baudhayana's reformation, to gotras. Attention should be drawn to two main assumptions involved here, one being about the anteriority and fundamental nature of the cognatic prohibitions, the other about "local exogamy" as independent from exogamy in the ordinary sense. Starting from what we know today, both assumptions seem hardly justifiable. Brahmans as well as Kshatriyas have in fact exogamous units, and this is true of others (whether or not they are called "gotra" is irrelevant). It does not, then, appear very profitable to take into consideration ancient data, which are by their very nature much less definite, in order to question what lies before our eyes. If there were a sociological question as to the genuineness and real distribution and impact of a prohibition, it would be about the *sāpiṇḍya* rules, which bear all signs of a pedantic brahmanic elaboration, and which are not easily taken at their face value (divergences between different sources, etc.). Why is it necessary to suppose that the Kshatriyas had them once upon a time, instead of what we know them to have (and to a large extent to have had), namely a system based on exogamy?

The reason for this lies in two principles, which, although not stated, still govern all this development: one is that all marriage prohibitions found in a given group must spring from one single principle, the second that North and South should be found to be different in this respect. Both principles are obeyed in stating that the South has exogamy, the North cognatic prohibitions. As this is only part of the truth, the author has taken great pains to get rid of the one set of prohibitions which should not be found according to principle in each area, i.e. of exogamy in the north and of cognatic prohibitions in the South. The following passage, taken from the South-Indian chapter, shows an attitude at work which is symmetrical to that we found dealing with the North:

> The types of marriage allowed in South India conform to the rule of clan exogamy. There is only one exception and that is that there is a general prejudice against the marriage of the children of two sisters, i.e. of maternal parallel cousins. This taboo is not observed in certain castes ... In South India a man can and does sometimes marry his wife's younger sister, two sisters sometimes marry two brothers and this possibility may have resulted in the prejudice against the marriage of maternal parallel cousins. If two sisters are married into one family, their children will belong to the same paternal clan, and so marriage is prohibited (p. 186).

In other words, all prohibited marriages are such by virtue of the rule of exogamy. There is an "exception", or rather another prohibition. This requires an "explanation", while, let us notice the point, no explanation is needed for similar rules in the North (but on the contrary,

there, it is exogamy which requires "explanation"). But in actual fact both kinds of prohibitions, exogamic and cognatic, are found in both areas. Furthermore, there is an essential difference between the two kinds, which makes it impossible to reduce them to a single principle. It is that exogamy bars the same persons for all (male) members of the exogamous unit, while cognatic prohibitions, being expressed in terms of individual kinship relations, bar other persons for other individuals.[2]

The difference between North and South here bears only on the range or content of cognatic prohibitions, not on the nature of marriage prohibitions. This is most closely connected with kinship terminologies. Incidentally one may venture here an hypothesis as to cognatic prohibitions in the North. From the analysis of the terminology[3] it seems probable that they bear essentially on the children of uncles and aunts without any classificatory extensions. This is closer to Blunt's formula (see note 1 on p. 51)[4] than to the present writer's.

To return to the northern zone, a few words remain to be said, about what our author calls "local exogamy". Two cases should be distinguished. One is when there is a distinct rule prohibiting marriage on a purely local basis, i.e. with people belonging to other exogamous divisions (as above p. 53). It would be advisable to restrict the use of the term to this case, in order to differentiate it from the other, when (lineal) exogamy is simply tinged with locality, as is natural among people who are at the same time patrilineal (as regards membership in the exogamous division) and patrilocal. We might add that the existence of the first case (local exogamy in the strict sense) supposes that several local descent groups may be settled in the same place, and this goes against the author's assumption that descent and locality are so closely connected that there is as a rule only one descent group in one place. Above all, it is one thing to recognize that lineal exogamy is most often tinged with locality, and sometimes coupled with purely local exogamy, and it is another to contend that lineal exogamy is not general in the area, but only local exogamy.

Mrs. Karvé makes interesting remarks about the relation of exogamy and locality in the past, among Kshatriyas. We shall not venture to discuss her view of the material, but only offer a few comments. She discusses (p. 53) whether *kula* and *vaṁśa* in the Epics can be translated as "clan". Groups are found in India, which trace descent from a common ancestor, are named and exogamous,

When a clan splits or some members wander off, they still bear the original

[2] The interdiction of marrying in a clan (or gotra) different from one's own, e.g. in the mother's gotra, cannot for this reason be taken as part of an exogamic rule.

[3] L. Dumont, "Le Vocabulaire de parenté dans l'Inde du Nord," *Institut Français d'Anthropologie, Comptes Rendus*, février 1956.

[4] Cf. Risley, *The People of India* (1908), p. 155.

name, or if they take a new name they still prohibit marriage with the original group. These clans may be territorial in origin but are not necessarily so today and a man wandering far from his home territory would be treated as a clan brother by a person whom he may never have seen, provided he has the same clan-name.

To sum up, the clan, once in existence, is not affected by locality.

Neither *vaṁśa* nor *kula* possess these characteristics of a clan. *Vaṁśa* is a line of patrilineal descent. *Kula* is a patri-kin based on a locality. If a junior branch of a *kula* wandered away and established itself elsewhere and changed its name, marriage between it and the original *kula* could take place. The clan-name was fixed. The *vaṁśa* or *kula* name on the other hand had no fixity. They were patronymics derived from the name of some famous ancestors and when a new hero arose he gave his name to his own descendants (p. 53–54).

This, taken in its wider sense, is probably of wide application in India. It has long been customary there to call "clan" any exogamous unit. Here, clearly one is dealing with lineage groups, the segmentation or the division of which is influenced by locality as well as by other factors. It is high time to take advantage of the theory and terminology of lineage studies, more than the author herself does in this book and even in this passage.

One is less at ease if one considers the inference which Mrs. Karvé draws – at least implicitly – from the above, i.e. that among Kshatriyas there was no exogamy proper (this being co-terminous with clans) but a system in which exogamy was attached more to locality than to paternal descent. Without accepting this formulation, we would not deny that there is a question here, but the case would be stronger if it was not argued in conformity with a bias we already noticed. Could one not say that patrilineal exogamy was qualified by locality as well as by other factors, as appears from the custom of changing the *kula* name by choosing a different ancestor as *kulakara* (kula-maker) (p. 54)? On the whole, Mrs. Karvé's views on this point are an example of the overrating of the locality factor which we have inherited and against which a reaction is happily setting in. [See the article on the Village.]

The chapter on the Central Zone is the best of the book. An attempt is made to distinguish the institutions of people situated in different parts of the area and on different social levels. One regrets only that the description has to remain sketchy, as the chapter takes only about forty pages in all (p. 137–179), while a detailed analysis of one or a few groups in this area, where Mrs. Karvé's knowledge is at its best, would probably have best served the development of these studies. Something is said about Rajputana, Gujarat and Kathiawad, Orissa, but the bulk of the chapter, apart from terminological charts, is devoted to Maharashtra.

The prevalence of hypergamy was mentioned, and its importance

briefly stated, in the Northern Zone, but the treatment of it was reserved for Rajputana and Maharashtra, as being more typical. On this topic a number of points are made, it is only a pity that they are not set out at some length and the facts duly established.

The hypergamous marriage can exist without cross-cousin marriage as it does in fact in the case of certain Northern Brahmin castes and among certain Gujarat castes and among Rajput themselves. The (matrilateral) cross-cousin marriage ... is not a compulsory form of marriage among Rajputs but it is quite frequent and is mentioned in many stories about the ruling houses of Rajputana, Kathiawad and Gujarat (p. 144, see also p. 142).

The Maratha caste's hypergamous arrangement is of great interest. The clans are grouped in graded divisions named after the number of clans which they comprise, the less numerous being superior and the more numerous inferior, *and the superior being contained within the inferior* (e.g. the "five clans" division is superior to, and contained in, the "seven clans" division, and so on) (p. 157–8). This the author represents by concentric circles. Let us remark that the numerical pattern corresponds to one of two varieties found in Northern India. The particular feature is the fitting in of the upper within the lower, which logically entails that the upper is less numerous than the lower.

Among the same people, we are shown the combination of hypergamy with repeated intermarriage between "families", and preference for matrilateral cross-cousin marriage,[5] while marriage with the patrilateral cross-cousin is more or less prohibited[6] ("the creeper must not return"). Unfortunately, rather than describing with some detail, the author hastens to explain away hypergamy etc. as due to cultural (or racial?) contact:

The Maratha system of exogamous clans, each with its totemic symbol, have analogies only with the clan system of the southern people and may have been derived from them, the conquering people forming the higher groups while the conquered people acquired a lower status. The immigrants establishing themselves as a ruling class accepted daughters from the indigenous population without however deigning to give theirs in return, thus forming the system of cross-cousin marriage found in Maharashtra today. (p. 162).

At least for India it seems as if the phenomenon of preference for one type of marriage (that of a man to his mother's brother's daughter) is due to culture contact resulting in the establishment of hypergamous caste groups. (p. 163).

This speculation about origins needs not be discussed. One might simply point out that, even if the appearance of an institution was to be explained in this way, its permanence, the fact that it is found today, indeed, that cross-cousin marriage is still spreading in contemporary

[5] All such expressions refer to a man's point of view.

[6] One may suppose that this pronounced rejection, as different from a mere statement of inferiority, is linked with hypergamy.

Maharashtra as we are told, would need a fresh "explanation". It is perhaps possible to do a little more, and to show that the argument regarding c.c. marriage is inconsistent with the author's own statements and outlook. First, it is contradicted by the statement (previous quotation) that "hypergamous marriage can exist without cross-cousin marriage". Then, we have seen that the author is throughout preoccupied with the difference, sensed as a sort of incompatibility, between the northern and the southern systems, i.e. prohibition of cross-cousin marriage on the one hand, and preference for it on the other. In this perspective, matrilateral c.c. marriage is only one variety of a species found from Cape Comorin up to a part of the "Central Zone". The author recognizes that this institution has deep implications in kinship terminology and behaviour. Is it not contradictory then to isolate one variety from the others, and from most of its implications, and to have resort to an "explanation" by culture contact? The other varieties of cross-cousin marriage are not so explained in the next chapter, the fundamental sociological complex stands, only one variety of it has been detached and explained away culturologically.

The incompatibility between the two approaches is glaring, and destroys the coherence of the work. One has to choose.

To propose a more consistent view, we would point out that:

1) hypergamy should be precisely defined, the critical feature being perhaps that the status of the wife in the first or main marriage has, between recognized limits, no influence on the status of her children.
2) hypergamy so defined is one of the possible articulations between kinship and the hierarchical principle which is essential to the society in the caste system. Here it is advisable to distinguish between two forms of hypergamous organisation, where the hypergamous hierarchy ranks respectively exogamous units [Rajputs], or units within which marriage is possible [Marathas].
3) Matrilateral c.c. marriage is the one variety of c.c. marriage which is compatible with hypergamy (although they can be found separately).
4) (this being more hypothetical) hypergamy in patrilineal descent is North-Indian, c.c. marriage South-Indian, and their combination is characteristic of the zone of contact.

Two chapters deal with the Southern Zone, chapter V with a general outline (p. 181–195) and a detailed consideration of the terminology in Tamil (p. 195–229), chapter VI treating of the non-Tamil regions one by one. We shall restrict ourselves here to the general argument contained in chapter V. After a few words on patrilineal and matrilineal joint families, exogamous clans are stressed as more widely distributed than in the north. Again at variance with the north, regarding the territorial distribution of the clans, there does not seem to be an identity of the

clan with one village or one territory. "More than one intermarrying clans may live in one village and practise intermarriage for generations" (p. 183). Further, the clans, or rather the joint families belonging to them, are linked by intermarriages, which are governed by this principle that "a new marriage seems to be determined by the marriages which have taken place already". All this is given as general and is not localised, neither is localised, more unfortunately, the interesting observation that follows, which cannot be taken as true in general: in actual fact thus are "formed smaller circles of endogamous units made up of a few families giving and receiving daughters in marriage; these we may call *cuṟṟam* or *cuṟṟu* [i.e. circles] following tamil usage." After a paragraph on the prohibition of marriage between parallel maternal cousins (above p. 54), the author outlines, with examples, the three preferred types of marriages "in order of importance": 1) uncle-niece marriage (mostly marriage with elder sister's daughter only); 2) patrilateral c.c. marriage; 3) matrilateral c.c. marriage. About the last, the claim is reiterated that it goes with hypergamy.[7] At the same time it is recognized that "there are also a number of marriages outside the group of close kin", and that other prohibitions than those resulting from exogamy are observed. (Further on it is said that "exchange of daughters is favoured" [p. 228]. Against this statement there is some localised evidence from one of us.[8] What can we say then, except that the statement cannot be accepted unless it is properly localised?)

A few comments. The formula expressing marriage alliance is very happy indeed. Marriage preferences had been previously distinguished, but it is good that this is done here clearly by an Indian author. Only it is a pity that they are taken in isolation, and that the relations between them are not stated. One should think that uncle–niece marriage is mostly coupled with another type.[9] As far as their ranking is concerned, the lack of specification and localisation makes it useless. As the author writes on another occasion such questions "can be set at rest only by detailed studies of all communities" (p. 270).

Then comes the terminology in the four written Dravidian languages. Tamil terms have been chosen for detailed consideration

> because their meaning could be fixed by referring to literature which is older than the literature of the other Dravidian languages ... The terms given above were gathered by personal enquiry among Tamil-speaking people of various castes. Then they were checked by the help of the Tamil Lexicon and lastly an attempt was made to get at their exact use in Tamil literature (p. 203).

[7] See above. The Kallar are cited as evidence. The claim that they 'have an hypergamous division of society' is not justified.

[8] Louis Dumont, *Hierarchy and Marriage Alliance in South Indian Kinship*, part. II.

[9] Cf. A. Aiyappan, "Cross-cousin and Uncle-Niece Marriage in South India", *Congrès International des Sciences Anthr. et Ethnologiques* (London, 1934).

Here we find again this unacceptable notion that the meaning of terms in use at present cannot finally be established or understood but with the help of a very old literature. As the number of "synonyms" is particularly great in Tamil (p. 203), the fact that the terms are not localised is of great inconvenience. In particular, we don't know what are the terms used by people who have a certain marriage rule (uncle-niece marriage for instance) and which are used by others. The lists of terms are followed by a detailed, mainly linguistic, commentary (p. 203–216). A summary is provided, but unhappily the northern system is taken as frame of reference (p. 217 *sq.*). In particular there is a confusion between simple and compounded terms; it is not true to say that a Tamil speaker cannot express complicated individual relationships, as do North-Indian people, by composition. The difference is that most simple, uncompounded terms, are individualising in one case and classificatory in the other. A discussion in terms of "extended family of birth" etc. (above p. 49) leads up to this:

We have already seen that in the south there is no special term for an affinal relative, which is not used for a blood-relative also, and so the basis of classification of kin must be different as compared to that in the north. As all kin are blood-relatives, we have to distinguish between those who are blood-relatives *only* and those who are blood-relatives *and* affinal relatives at the same time. We then get the following two classes (p. 221).

This is a decisive juncture and a number of remarks are called for. In the first place, while nothing in the preceding discussion of terms announced it, here comes in suddenly the idea that there is a dichotomy in Tamil terminology. The source of this idea in previous work by other people is not mentioned.[10] Instead, the author starts from the clear distinction she finds in Indo-Aryan languages between relatives by blood and relatives by marriage, opposing "father" to "father-in-law" etc. (chart for Sanskrit, p. 217). This is true, but it is only part of the truth: there are also terms there for paternal and maternal uncle, so that many other distinctions could equally well be abstracted from the terminology. The situation is quite different when, as in Tamil, there are only two terms for male relatives in the father's generation: there we get a number of distinctions, here one single distinction, a dichotomy which can be followed up for other sorts of relatives. This being so, it is paradoxical to hear that there is no clear-cut distinction in the

[10] Since Morgan, the distinction was most often considered to be between "parallel" and "cross" relatives. Morgan himself wrote: "The Tamilian system proceeds with the utmost regularity, it is coherent, self-sustaining and harmonious throughout, although..." (Lewis H. Morgan, *Systems of Consanguinity and Affinity of the Human Family*, 1871, p. 394). Rivers emphasized the relation with cross-cousin marriage. L. Dumont suggested in 1950 that the dichotomy sprang from marriage alliance. Sources in L. Dumont, "Dravidian Kinship Terminology as an Expression of Marriage," *Man*, 1953, No. 54 (note 2 sq.).

south, when compared to the north. Indeed the south looks systematic, and the north empirical. Has not our author simply failed to see where the logic of the southern system lies?

To return to the passage quoted, if all relatives are blood-relatives, then surely this feature is not the principle of their distinction in two categories. If one category is made up of affinal relatives, what is the characteristic of the other? The author's argument is equivalent to saying that it is zero.[11] The distinction then would be between relatives who have affinal properties and relatives who have not. This may not be the best possible formulation. Mrs. Karvé comes to this by assuming that she knows what a blood-relative is, and what an affinal relative, in any society. It does not occur to her that people who marry their crosscousin may have on this point ideas different from those of people who do not. In a sense, what she is complaining about – that they have no clear-cut distinction between consanguinity and affinity – is embodied in this marriage rule. Let us only admit that some people, or rather a given terminology, may take a certain person as an affinal relative while we take her as a bloodrelative and call her a crosscousin, and the difficulty vanishes. It is remarkable that we need not in any way renounce the opposition between consanguinity and affinity, provided we understand that their content changes. The distinction in Tamil is between consanguineous and affinal relatives (i.e. relatives given in the system as such).[12] Mrs. Karvé was right in accepting the affinal content of one category, she remains halfways only because she was not prepared to go beyond her own ideas about affinity etc.

At this point the author becomes, in our view, further and further estranged from the actual data. We must follow her and mark the major divergences. The chart that follows immediately upon the passage we discussed mixes up terminological and other data. The elder sister is listed among affinal relatives without any terminological justification, because in certain castes a man marries her daughter. More, she is assimilated to an affinal relative of Ego's mother's generation. There is another methodological fault involved here: it would be indispensable to distinguish the terminology of people who have that marriage rule from the terminology of people who do not have it. (In our view, major differences would appear.) A portentous conclusion is drawn: "There does not seem to be any clear-cut classification of kin on the principle of generation" (p. 223).[13] We submit that this is not justified by the kinship

[11] The opposition would be what Troubetzkoy calls a privative opposition (N. S. Troubetzkoy, *Grundzüge der Phonologie*, French transl. by J. Cantineau, Paris, 1949, p. 77).

[12] L. Dumont, *loc.cit.;* and *Hierarchy and Marriage Alliance in South Indian Kinship*, London, Royal Anthrop. Institute, Occ. Paper No. 12 (in the press).

[13] This would seem to be natural among people practising uncle-niece marriage, but their terminology is characterized rather by the presence of individualizing and

terms Mrs. Karvé has listed, at least *taken with their present meaning in any one given group*. It is true that she is able to refer to some diachronic assimilations between different generations in the literature, but this is a different question altogether. She states:

> in the south the center (point of reference) of the whole kin-group is the Ego [but is not Ego the center of any kinship terminology whatsoever?] and all the relatives are arranged into two primary groups 1) older than the Ego and 2) younger than the Ego.

This is not so, and one is surprised to see how our author rejects on the most slender grounds what is obvious for any Tamil-speaker and what generations of scholars since Morgan have recognized. It is true that Ego's generation is split according to age just as other relatives are distinguished according to generations. But Mrs. Karvé is overconcerned to discover something which makes southern terminology as different as possible from northern.[14] She goes on by coining Tamil terms in order to give a local flavour to a distinction which she has introduced.

> We can call all those in the category, older than ego as *Tam-mun* relatives. *Tam* = self, me; *Mun* = before, i.e. all those (born) before me. In the same way the category younger than ego can be named *Tam-pin* relatives. *Tam* = self, me; *Pin* = after, i.e. the people (born) after me.

And she goes on, using these new expressions, first between inverted commas, and then simply in italics, as if they were genuine Tamil categories.[15] After a development on grandfather-grand-daughter marriage, we come to a statement of the rule of marriage (p. 228) which is very incomplete and which has been framed, as everything that precedes, with the purpose of finding a common denominator between the groups which practise uncle-niece marriage and those which do not. The only positive conclusion one can draw from all this is that it is indispensable, on the contrary, to separate them.

In one page (p. 228–9), the results are summed up in comparison with the north. These are the last lines:

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more or less analytical terms. Apart from the point of method, an interesting point of fact emerges here. It is about the importance of uncle-niece marriage in the general Tamil make-up. For our author, it is as fundamental as cross-cousin marriage. From the experience of one of us in the southernmost districts, it looks to be a custom practised only by some of the upper castes and entailing aberrancies in the terminological scheme. This is stated in view of future research.

[14] Still one finds several features showing, in terminology as well as in behaviour, in the Northern Zone, an assimilation between different generations. So *vadhū* in sanskrit means "wife" and "daughter-in-law", or, we read, "The elder brother of the husband is a tabooed relative for a woman... He is to her as a father-in-law" (p. 112).

[15] Tamil *tambi* means younger brother; *tammuN* is found in the *Manimegalai* for elder brother (*Tamil Lexicon*, s. v.).

The North represents the principle of extended exchange, a policy of expansion, incorporation of outsiders as wives in the family, leading to great stresses and strains, a double standard of women's behaviour pattern, a wide circle of kin, a society having a pastoral economy or an agricultural economy supported by pastoral pursuits.

The South represents the principle of immediate exchange, a policy of consolidation, a clustering of kin-group in a narrow area, no sharp distinction between kin by blood and kin by marriage, greater freedom for women in a society which was mainly agricultural, with very few or almost no pastoral traditions.

Apart from the unexpected sudden reference to agricultural and pastoral pursuits – however interesting it may be in itself – and the use of the terms "extended exchange" and "immediate exchange" which are borrowed from a theory of cross-cousin marriage,[16] and qualified by the remarks we made earlier, what remains here is little more than the truism that people in the south marry closer, in terms of kin as well as of space, than in the north. This we knew already before reading Mrs. Karvé, and it has not become more precise, as one might refer to the obvious difference in this matter from one caste to another, or from the upper levels to the lower levels of the society, in one and the same region. As the author writes on p. 125 "it would be interesting to find out the exact limits of the inner [exogamic] and outer [endogamic] circles of exclusion and inclusion in different northern areas and among different castes". Moreover alliance in the sense of repeated intermarriage, if it is a southern feature, is not absolutely absent in the north, as the author writes *(ibid.)* "One gives daughters in marriage to families with whom old affinal relations of one's own family or of one's affinal families can be established." At the same time it is recognised that in the south a number of marriages occur between unrelated persons. If this is so, if furthermore, as we tried to show, it is not possible to look on marriage prohibitions in the two areas as based respectively on different principles, then the difference between north and south as finally stated is more quantitative than qualitative. We have not been able to get at any real "principle" of this difference, beyond the obvious one in terminology and cross-cousin marriage.

The most disappointing feature of this book in our view is that, in attempting too much, it has not succeeded either in establishing solidly a useful body of well-localised data, or in bringing forth any sound conceptual tool. The elucidation of Indian kinship cannot be the work of one single scholar, however gifted he may be, it will be the work of a number of students whose individual efforts will be intended as a contribution, resting on the contributions of others, towards that common

[16] Cl. Lévi-Strauss, *Structures élémentaires de la parenté* (Paris, 1949).

enterprise. The only short-cut is sound method. The monographic study remains the only source of valuable data as well as of valuable abstractions. Certainly comparison is also necessary, but any attempt at comparison which is not combined with thorough monographic work is doomed to failure. As unpleasant as it may appear to some, one has to choose between sociology and culturology.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO INDIAN SOCIOLOGY

II